Desierto's woes far from over, opponents warn

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Gloria confirms 'turf war' over kidnaps

By Dona Pazzibugan and TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday acknowledged a "turf war" within the Philippine National Police yesterday, even as PNP Director General Leandro Mendoza dismissed speculations that the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force would be sidelined fol-

GLORIA/A19

Most solons back Erap bid

US surgery for ex-President gains support in House, Senate

By Juliet Javellana, Michael Lim Ubac and Cynthia D. Balana

THE UNEXPECTED twin resolutions in the Senate and the House of Representatives urging the government to allow ousted President Joseph Estrada to travel to the United States for knee surgery have Malacañang's blessings, according to opposition legislators.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, however, said she was keeping her hands off the issue and leaving it to the Sandiganbayan.

In an unusual development, 19 senators crossing party lines have signed the Senate resolution while 128 members of the House have affixed their signatures to the counterpart resolution in the House.

From only 25 on Monday when the House resolution was first circulated, the number of signatories ballooned to 128 yesterday.

"As you can see, we are only 19 in the minority so the ones really helping us here are the majority," said Rep. Didagen Dilangalen, principal author of the House resolution.

The signatories include former House prosecutors in the aborted Senate impeachment trial of Estrada as well as high-ranking officials of the House and the ruling Lakas-NUCD party.

Estrada, who is detained at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center while undergoing trial for plunder, had asked the Sandiganbayan to consult a surgeon of his choice regarding the osteoarthritis afflicting both his knees.

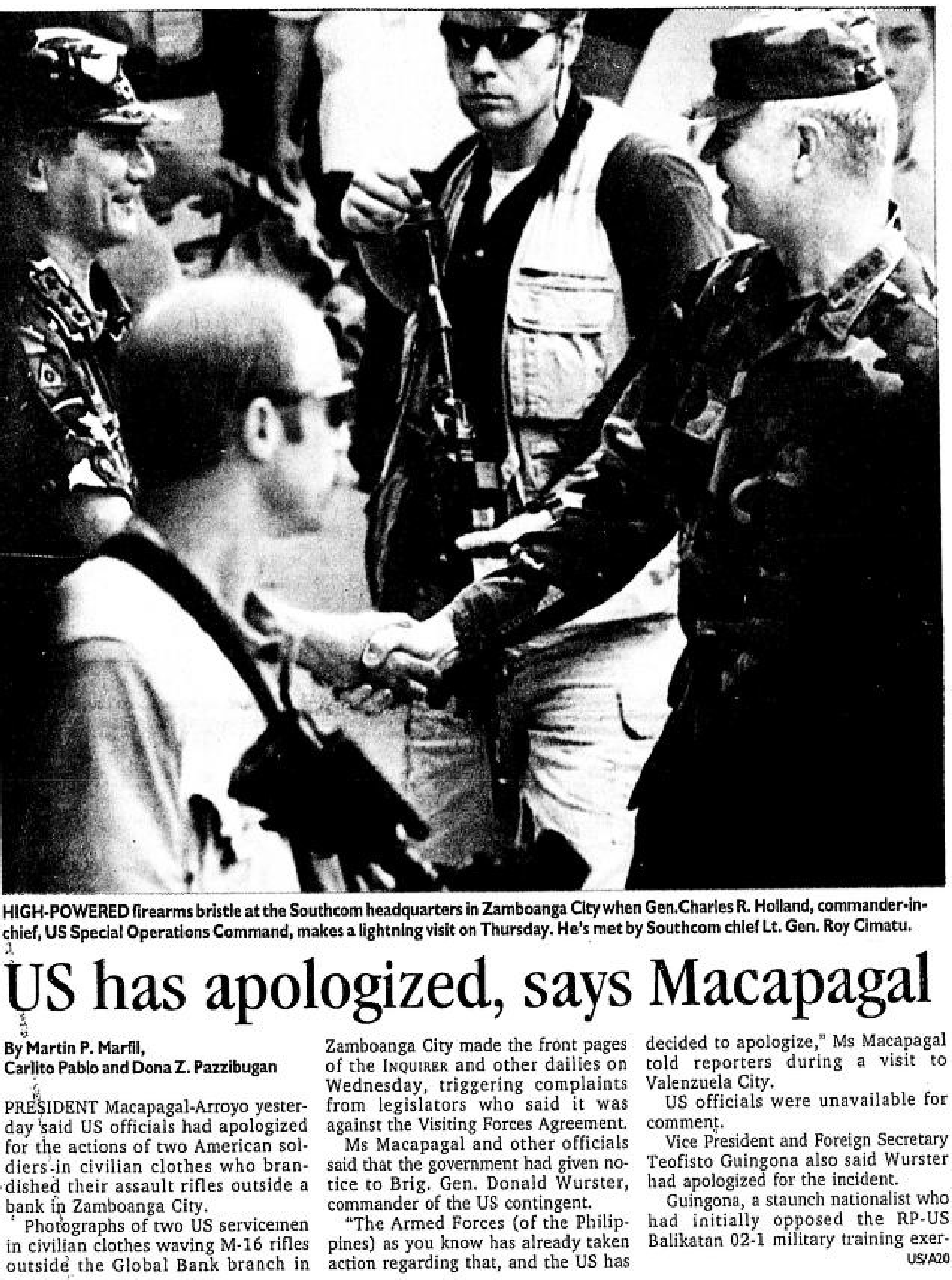
However, the anti-graft court junked Estrada's request after Filipino surgeons admitted to having the expertise and equipment to conduct the operation.

Although Dilangalen claimed the resolution was based on humanitarian grounds and thus "apolitical," some signatories indicated that the bicameral move had the blessings of both Malacañang and Estrada.

Asked if Malacañang had been sounded off about the resolution, opposition Rep. Agapito "Butz" Aquino said: "Oh yes. In fact, majority congressmen are the signatories."

Dilangalen said he did not know if Malacañang had given its blessings to

MOST/A19



VAL HANDUMON

HIGH-POWERED firearms bristle at the Southcom headquarters in Zamboanga City when Gen.Charles R. Holland, commander-in-chief, US Special Operations Command, makes a lightning visit on Thursday. He's met by Southcom chief Lt. Gen. Roy Cimatu.

US has apologized, says Macapagal

By Martin P. Marfil, Carlito Pablo and Dona Z. Pazzibugan

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said US officials had apologized for the actions of two American soldiers in civilian clothes who brandished their assault rifles outside a bank in Zamboanga City.

Photographs of two US servicemen in civilian clothes waving M-16 rifles outside the Global Bank branch in Zamboanga City made the front pages of the INQUIRER and other dailies on Wednesday, triggering complaints from legislators who said it was against the Visiting Forces Agreement.

Ms Macapagal and other officials said that the government had given notice to Brig. Gen. Donald Wurster, commander of the US contingent.

"The Armed Forces (of the Philippines) as you know has already taken action regarding that, and the US has decided to apologize," Ms Macapagal told reporters during a visit to Valenzuela City.

US officials were unavailable for comment.

Vice President and Foreign Secretary Teofisto Guingona also said Wurster had apologized for the incident.

Guingona, a staunch nationalist who had initially opposed the RP-US Balikatan 02-1 military training exer-

US/A20

GMA blue: 'I feel like throwing in the towel'

By Carlito Pablo

MARGARET Thatcher wouldn't have approved. Yesterday, before a sympathetic crowd, the woman Time magazine called the Iron Lady of Asia showed there was plenty of marshmallow beneath the steel.

"I work every day, 16 hours a day, six days a week, with only Sunday devoted to my family," President Macapagal-Arroyo told residents of Valenzuela City celebrating the fourth anniversary of cityhood yesterday. "And then (critics) say it's not felt (by the people)."

"I feel like throwing in the towel instead; there's no more hope. Just serve out the rest of my term; just coast along," the President said in Filipino mixed with a sprinkling of English.

"The truth is, I'm also human," she said.

Critics have charged that while the Macapagal administration has reported upbeat economic statistics, ordinary people have not experienced any tangible relief. "A lot say that my administration only has good statistics but these are not being felt by the people," she said.

But much of the criticism in recent weeks has centered on the controversial RP-US war games, Balikatan 02-1, set to begin in Zamboanga City and on Basilan island next week.

Yesterday, the President came under scathing criticism from a renowned provincemate, the 89-year-old Luis Taruc, once the supremo of the Hukbalahap guerrilla movement.

"President (Macapagal) has welcomed the Americans with open arms (and) open legs," Taruc told the INQUIRER. "She talks and acts like a puppet of the US government." ***(See related story.)***

At the Senate, a co-author of the Visiting Forces Agreement blasted the

GMA/A20

LOVE feast on Valentine's Day: The engaged couple, Mikey Arroyo and Angela Montenegro, are flanked by their parents, President Macapagal and Mike Arroyo and Herman and Charito Montenegro.

EDWIN BACASMAS

It's official: Palace wedding set next month

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

THE EMOTIONAL quotient of President Macapagal-Arroyo may have reached new heights on Valentine's Day yesterday as she and her husband, Mr. Mike Arroyo, formally asked for the hand of Angela Montenegro on behalf of their eldest son, Pampanga Vice Governor Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo.

In the Filipino tradition of "*pamanhikan* (engagement party)" the parents of the groom-to-be went last night to the residence of the bride-to-be in Forbes Park, Makati, to break bread and discuss wedding plans together with her parents, Herman and Charito Montenegro.

The Montenegro-Macapagal wedding will be held next month. Former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos are among the principal sponsors that the engaged couple have in mind, Mikey said.

It will end Mikey's 11 months of courtship of Angela, who is his second cousin. Angela's mother, Charito, is a first cousin of Mr. Mike Arroyo.

The President's two other children, Evangelina Lourdes or Luli and Diosdado Ignacio Jose Maria or Dato, were present during what Mikey called "a very special occasion" for the family.

IT'S/A20

Ex-Huk supremo hits Gloria over Americans' return

By Jerry Esplanada

SHE'S not worthy.

Luis Taruc, former supremo of the Hukbalahap guerrilla movement, told the INQUIRER yesterday that the second President to bear the name of Macapagal was not worthy of the first.

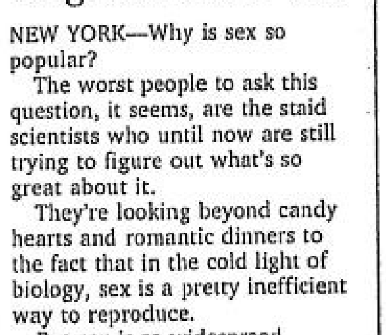
"We are allowing Americans back into the country and President (Macapagal-Arroyo) is behind this," Taruc said in mixed English and Filipino. "She is not a worthy daughter of her father, and not a worthy granddaughter of (the late) Honorio Ventura."

It was the philanthropist Ventura, Taruc said, "who sent Diosdado Macapagal to school. The father of President Gloria was like a brother to me, because Honorio Ventura treated us as family."

Taruc assailed his *cabalen* (provincemate) for allowing the holding of Balikatan 02-1, the controversial RP-US military training exercise.

"President (Macapagal) has welcomed the Americans with open arms (and) open legs," Taruc said. "What she did was senseless. She talks and acts like a puppet of the US government."

EX-HUK/A19



Scientists still wondering what's so great about sex

NEW YORK—Why is sex so popular?

The worst people to ask this question, it seems, are the staid scientists who until now are still trying to figure out what's so great about it.

They're looking beyond candy hearts and romantic dinners to the fact that in the cold light of biology, sex is a pretty inefficient way to reproduce.

But sex is so widespread among plants and animals that there must be some payoff.

Yet after more than a half-century of debate and some 20 published theories, scientists are

SCIENTISTS/A21

Second FRONT PAGE

DI PA TAPOS ANG LABAN!

Ani's woes far from over

By Christine O. Avendaño
and Juliet L. Javellana

OMBUDSMAN Aniano Desierto's problems are far from over despite his having hurdled the bid to impeach him in the House of Representatives.

The lawyer who had filed the impeachment complaint against Desierto said he intends to question before the Supreme Court the House vote on Wednesday that upheld the committee report dismissing his complaint.

A total of 122 congressmen voted to uphold the House justice committee report junking the impeachment complaint against Desierto, while 30 representatives voted against it and five abstained.

Pro-impeachment congressmen, however, said they intend to take Desierto on when the House committee on good government investigates the P5.3-billion tax credit certificates scam, whose prosecution the Ombudsman allegedly deliberately bungled.

The allegation against Desierto formed the basis for the second impeachment complaint against him in the House.

"The House did not follow its own impeachment rules, for it violated the right of an ordinary citizen to pursue an impeachment complaint against an impeachable official," said Ernesto Francisco Jr., the lawyer who had filed the dismissed impeachment complaint against Desierto.

Not giving up

Yesterday, Francisco bared plans to go to the Supreme Court next week to question the House vote.

DESIERTO

The House, he charged, had effectively deprived him of his right to present his evidence against Desierto, whom he had accused of taking a bribe from businessman Luke Roxas in 1997 to hold in abeyance an investigation of Roxas' bank.

Roxas was Francisco's client at the time. Roxas' Bank of Southeast Asia was being investigated for allegedly cashing checks totaling P539 million that had been issued by Petron Corp. to the Bureau of Customs.

Francisco said he would also pursue his complaint against Speaker Jose de Venecia, whom he accused of favoring Desierto in the impeachment proceedings as well as blocking a House inquiry into the so-called Petron scam in 1997.

Probing the Speaker

Francisco asked the House committees on ethics and good government last week to investigate De Venecia, whom ex-undercover agent Mary Ong reportedly overheard telling Desierto not to worry about the House justice committee vote on Dec. 18, 2001.

Francisco said De Venecia also had stopped the House inquiry into the Petron scam in 1997 after his ex-client Roxas had asked him to.

Minority leader Carlos Padilla, the lone opposition member who voted against the justice committee report, said all was not yet lost since the House committee on good government has yet to investigate the tax credit certificates scam.

Ironically, Petron is also involved in the case where the oil firm was one of two that allegedly bought tax credit certificates they were not entitled to.

"This time he (Desierto) will not be able to elude us," Padilla said.

Last-minute lobbying

Padilla said that apparently, the "last-minute lobbying by Desierto's allies within and outside Congress" had worked.

Rep. Marcelino Libanan, chair of the justice committee that junked the impeachment complaint, said those intent on seeing Desierto in jail could still seek recourse in the courts.

"The (House vote) does not preclude them from seeking other remedies other than impeachment," committee member Rep. Prospero Nograles said in a press conference.

"There is no bar to the filing of charges and eventual incarceration of Desierto as long as you can prove his guilt," said Rep. Harlin Abayon, another justice committee member.

It would not result in impeachment, Libanan said, but the good government committee could file a resolution recommending Desierto's criminal prosecution.

Asked if the members of the justice committee thought the good government committee would conduct a fuller investigation of Desierto, Nograles replied: "It should."

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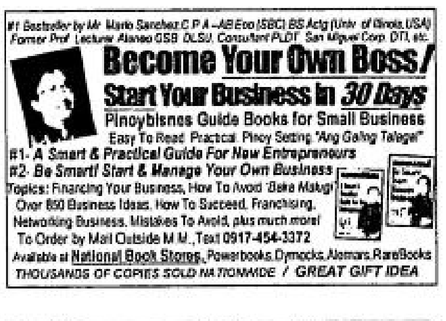
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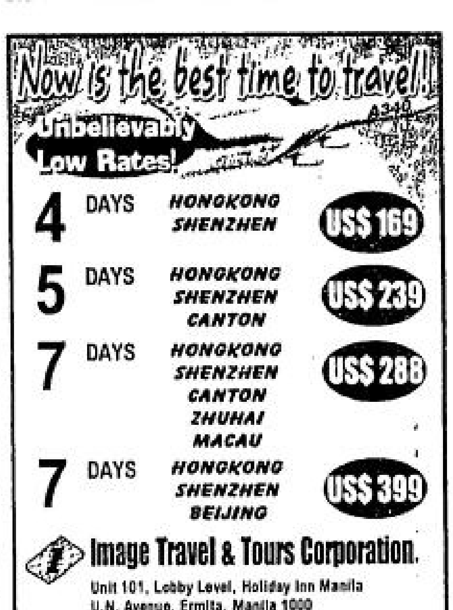
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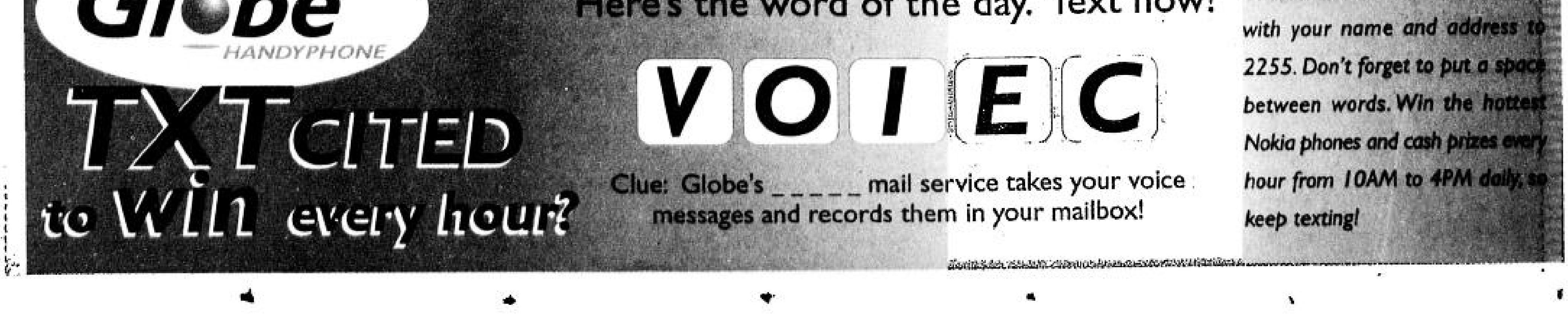
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Desierto offers 'hand of peace' to nemeses

By Michael Lim Ubac

FOLLOWING the dismissal of the impeachment complaint against him in the House of Representatives, Ombudsman Aniano Desierto said he was extending the "hand of peace" to his nemeses.

Desierto said he will not get back at Misamis Oriental Rep. Oscar Moreno and lawyer Ernesto Francisco Jr. despite their "false allegations" against him.

Desierto said at a press conference yesterday that he was inviting the two to "join and assist" the Ombudsman's Office in its fight against graft and corruption in government.

"I invite them to join us in our fight against corruption. I would like to ask them to assist us in the tax credit certificates scam investigation so that all those who benefited from the anomaly would be prosecuted to the fullest," Desierto said.

Desierto added that Moreno and Francisco's cooperation would be "highly appreciated."

He said his office is conducting a formal inquiry into the P5.3-billion tax credit scam after it receives further evidence from Task Force 156 on the involvement of 11 more garment firms belonging to the Chingkoe Group of Companies.

The garment firms were believed to have sold their tax credit certificates to oil giants Shell Philippines and Petron Corp., an illegal act.

Desierto also urged his detractors in Congress to set aside their personal differences "in the interest of justice."

On the other hand, he said, "I commend the House members (who voted in favor of dismissal) for their wisdom and independence in being able to (discern) what is just and true."

It was Moreno who had accused Desierto of bungling the P5.3-billion tax credit certificates scam, which became the grounds for the second impeachment complaint filed against Desierto on Jan. 25.

Francisco initiated the first impeachment complaint against Desierto late last year, in which he accused the Ombudsman of sitting on a case involving banker Luke Roxas in exchange for a bribe.

On Wednesday night, the House on a vote of 122-30 with five abstentions upheld the justice committee's dismissal of the first impeachment complaint.

The vote on the first complaint shielded Desierto from the second impeachment case as the Constitution imposes a one-year ban on the filing of a second impeachment complaint against the same public official.

Desierto had said that Francisco's allegations were "hearsay" and "purely speculative."

Asked if he was hurt by the allegations, he said: "Naturally, I was hurt. I was doing my best yet I was being attacked for it. That's why it pained me a lot."

On a personal level, he said the impeachment process took up all of his time: "I lost all my time for personal affairs—my wife and family."

On a professional level, he said: "It took much of my time, which should have been devoted to investigating and prosecuting corruption cases."

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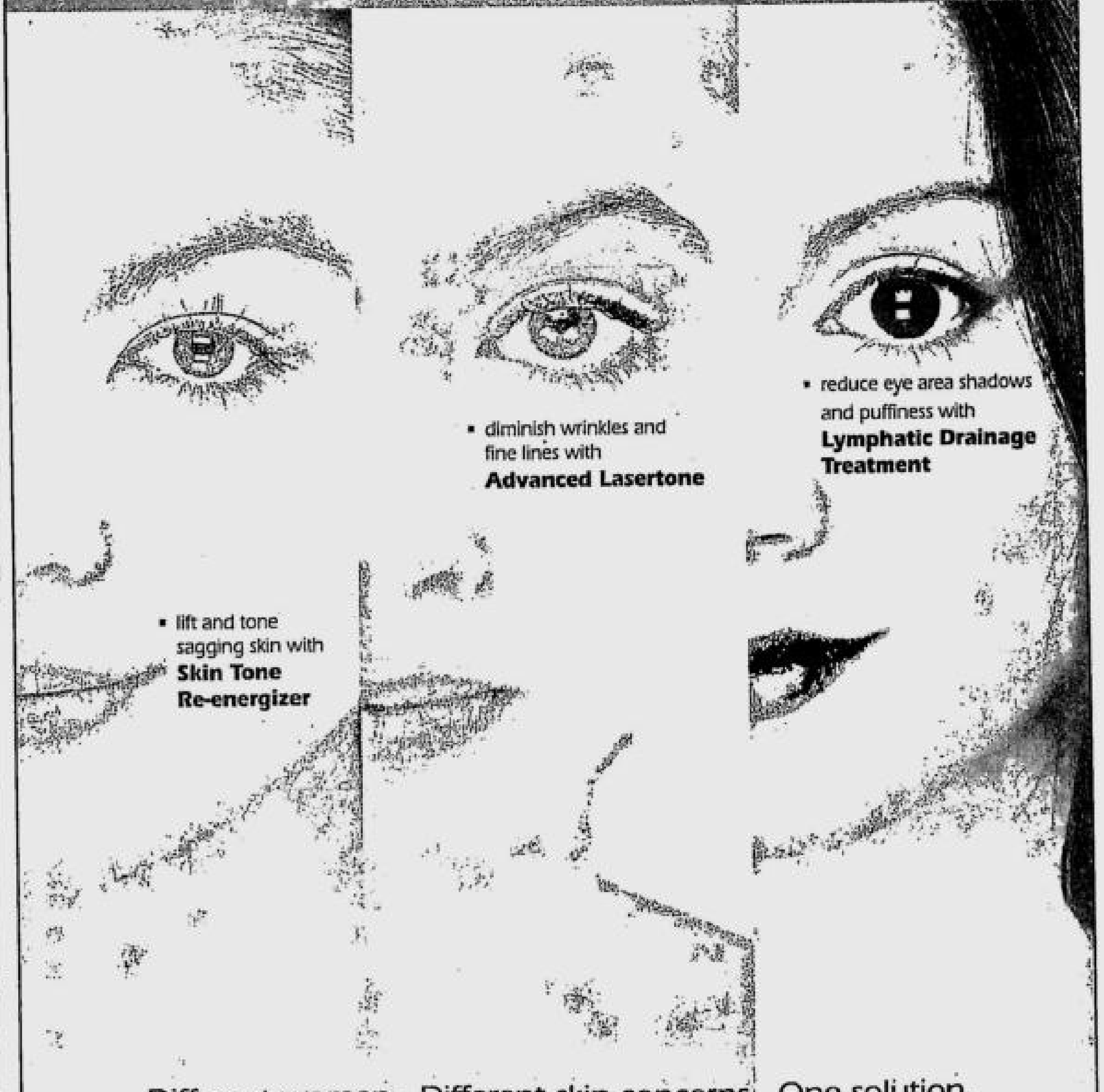
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Frustrated, family of missing casino man leaves for good

"WITH a heavy heart," the entire family of Edgar Bentain has left for the United States for good, frustrated over the government's inability to solve the abduction of the casino employee three years ago.

Tired and dejected, the family left Tuesday and asked the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption to see the case through, said VACC chair Dante Jimenez.

"They were very disappointed with everything," Jimenez told the INQUIRER Wednesday night.

Jimenez said the family had lost all hope of ever finding Bentain alive, since heavily armed men seized him outside the Grand Boulevard Hotel on Roxas Boulevard, Manila, on Jan. 16, 1999.

In an earlier interview, Bentain's brother Edcel had said the family's frustration grew after President Macapagal-Arroyo failed to live up to her promise to have the case solved.

Last year, Edcel, Jimenez and other anti-crime advocates went to Malacañang to seek the President's intercession in the case.

"The President herself assured us, still nothing happened," Jimenez said.

The National Bureau of Investigation has taken over the probe, after witness Angelo "Ador" Mawanay surfaced and claimed he had taken part in Bentain's abduction and murder.

Since then, however, the NBI has not bothered to update the Bentains on developments, if they were any, in the investigation, Jimenez said.

Mawanay had claimed he and other Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force agents had kidnapped Bentain and buried him alive in a steel drum in Pampanga.

The group was allegedly led by Senior Superintendents Michael Ray Aquino and Cesar Mancao, proteges of then PNP chief Panfilo Lacson.

Mawanay's revelation triggered a search for Bentain's remains, which turned up nothing. Mawanay was recently dropped from the Witness Protection Program for still unclear reasons.

Even then, Jimenez said, the government should not give up on the case.

Bentain, he said, should be regarded as a hero since it was he who "revealed the real Joseph Estrada."

The casino worker had released a video showing Estrada, then a presidential candidate, gambling in the hotel's casino. It was for this reason he was kidnapped, it was widely believed. *Christian V. Esguerra*

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ROTARY CLUB OF UNITED NATIONS MANILA

Charter Presentation and 1st Induction of Officers Ceremonies

February 15, 2002 6:00 PM, Manila Hotel

Message

Allow me to convey my warmest felicitations to the Rotary Club of United Nations, Manila on its *Chartering and Induction Ceremonies.*

I commend the members of your organization for manifesting this commitment to be involved in community development activities and contribute to the betterment of other people's lives. The chartering of the Rotary Club in United Nations, Manila will certainly usher more vibrancy and progress in the area. I join our countrymen in Manila and outlying communities in welcoming the establishment of another invaluable civic organization that will be our partner in nation building.

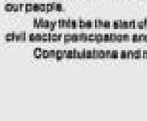
The Rotarian spirit of public service that your organization upholds is in consonance with our administration's call for greater unity and cooperation. It finds greater importance in the face of present daunting challenges that we must overcome to realize our national aspirations. With the partnership in national development of such organizations as the Rotary Club of United Nations, Manila and our people's resolve, I am certain that we will be able to succeed in attaining greater progress and prosperity for the most number of our people.

May this be the start of unparalleled service from your organization. I urge you to be steadfast in promoting civil sector participation and involving more people in worthy undertakings.

Congratulations and more power. MABUHAY!

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President of the Republic of the Philippines

Message



It gives me pleasure to welcome the Rotary Club of United Nations-Manila to a roster of dignified civic organizations in the country.

Being a "new kid on the block" I am confident that you can make a difference in your community and eventually in the entire nation through your steadfast commitment to public service. Your existence is much needed in our pursuit to achieve greater growth and development for our country.

As you start to handle a much bigger responsibility being a new partner of our government towards nation building and development, your Department of National Defense is behind you every step of the way. We, at the DND, believe that you can make your service even better with our support and that of other civic organizations around you.

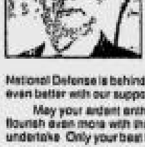
May your ardent enthusiasm to offer self-sacrifice for the upliftment of the Filipinos' lives continue and flourish even more with the passage of time. I hope that you will give your best shot in every endeavor you undertake. Only your best is good enough.

May the good Lord bestow you with strength and wisdom to effectively perform the tasks set before you.

Congratulations and good luck!

ANGELO T. REYES
Secretary

Message



My warmest felicitations to the charter members of the Rotary Club of United Nations Manila on the occasion of the Charter Presentation and Induction of Members and Officers for Rotary year 2001-02.

I congratulate PDG Johnny Aruego, the DGSR, and President Arsenio Ong of RC Downtown Manila for their untiring efforts in extending and organizing this Club. My best wishes go to DDG Willie Sato who despite his multifarious activities found time to lead as charter president of this new club. I congratulate the new set of officers and directors of the Rotary Club of United Nations Manila. I am confident that this new team could address the important issues of membership development, Rotary's public image, Rotary education and training and club development and improvement.

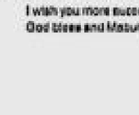
Rotary clubs and the individual Rotarians who serve are the source of the good that Rotary accomplishes in the world. It is through dedicated, committed leaders at the club level that Rotarians are inspired and given the opportunity to fully participate in service through Rotary. May the Rotary Club of United Nations Manila continue to render valuable assistance and demonstrate that "Mankind is Our Business."

I wish you more success and rest assured of my unfailing support in all your endeavors.

God bless and Mabuhay!

RODOLFO [illegible] ESTRELLADO
District Governor 2001-2002

Message



I am honored to serve as the Charter President of the Rotary Club of United Nations Manila. As a Rotarian, my experience goes back twenty-two years, having served as past president of the Rotary Club of Downtown Manila, and in various capacities for a number of past district governors as well as the incumbent District Governor Rodolfo Estrellado. I still expect more challenges and opportunities with the chartering of this new club.

My thanks to PDG Johnny C. Aruego, who helped initiate and guide us through a number of difficulties from the organization stage in September 2001, as a provisional club in November 2001 and finally approval of our charter on January 16, 2002. My thanks also to our sponsor club, the Rotary Club of Downtown Manila, especially President Arsenio Ong and IPP Benjamin Pineda whose support helped us realize this charter. And finally, my thanks to the officers and members of RC United Nations Manila, that during these times adversity, many of us formed the club as strangers and in spite of the difficulties we have become closer as friends and Rotarians.

The club has many plans and aspirations. It is now time to get to work to maintain and excel in the tradition of excellence of Rotary's ideal of service.

Mabuhay and God bless all of us!

WILLIAM "WILLIE" N. SATO
Charter President
R.Y. 2001-2002

PROGRAMME

Entrance of colors

Call to Order	**CP William N. Sato**
Invocation	**Csec Hector F. Ingles**
National Anthem	Philippine Anthem
Welcome Remarks	**Dtr. Jose Antonio N. Carrion**

TOAST & DINNER

Introduction of Dignitaries, Guests and visiting Rotarians	**Dtr. Amador T. Buenaseda, Jr.**
Induction of Members	
Oath as Rotarians	**SDG Rufino Sison**
Charging	**PDG Romulo del Rosario**
Charter Presentation	**DG Rodolfo S. Estrellado**
Induction of Officers & Board of Directors	
Charging	**SDG/PDG Johnny C. Aruego**
Oath-taking	**DG Rodolfo S. Estrellado**
Signing of Matching Club	
RC UN Manila	**CP William N. Sato**
RC Looc Lubang	**CP Manuel Liboro**
Inaugural Address	**CP William N. Sato**
Inspirational Message	**DG Rodolfo S. Estrellado**
Introduction of Guest of Honor and Speaker	**Dtr. Raul I. Nivera**
Speech	**Hon. Angelo T. Reyes** Secretary, Department of National Defense
Closing Remarks	**VP Makoto Kobayashi**
Adjournment	**CP William N. Sato**

Dtr. Jose Antonio N. Carrion & **Dtr. Elizabeth O. Chang**
HOSTS

DINNER & ENTERTAINMENT
MUSIC by SOUNDFORGE BAND

HISTORY

The territory sharing of Manila is Roxas Boulevard and United Nations Avenue, City of Manila. This is actually a large area if you form a triangle from the end tip of United Nations Avenue and the perpendicular end to end stretching Roxas Boulevard, Manila.

A particular aspect of the territory is that it is a rich source of foreign national members who either have their offices or residences in the line of Roxas Boulevard condominiums.

From past experience of the core group of Rotarians, foreign nationals make good members. There are many advantages to the club namely: contacts with foreign countries for commerce, projects and donations; rich cultural exchange within the club; better cooperation and support from multi-national companies that they represent.

The Rotarians came up with a name that is reflective of the territory and the fact that the membership is a respectable mix from the foreign communities. The name United Nations can have two fold meanings. The first is reflective of one that identifies the locality; and the second is reflective of that of a symbolic make-up of various nationalities comprising the membership. Thus the name Rotary Club of United Nations Manila came to be.

Rotary Club No. 57146, was chartered at Evanston, Chicago Illinois by Rotary International on January 16, 2002, under the stewardship of Rotarian William N. Sato, the club's guiding force and charter president.

Officers and Directors R.Y. 2001-2002

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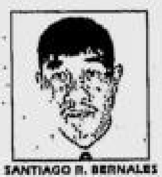
Charter President
Real Estate

MAKOTO KOBAYASHI
President Elect & Vice President
Dentistry

HECTOR F. INGLES
Club Secretary
Fast Food Distributor

ROSANNA D. IMAI
Club Treasurer
Foreign Exchange



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Banking

ELIZABETH O. CHANG
Director - Club Service 2
Realtor

JOSE ANTONIO N. CARRION
Director - Vocational Service
Vertical Construction

RAUL I. NIVERA
Director - Community Service
Financing

CHITO RAMIREZ
Acting Legal Adviser
Accountancy

AMADOR T. BUENASEDA, JR.
Auditor
Horizontal Construction

JOSE C. CASTRO
PRO

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HIROSHI YAMADA
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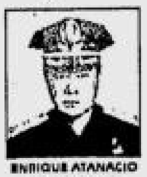
KOICHI KAWAMURA
Director at Large



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Tourism

SATORU MIZUSHIMA
Director at Large

SHOZABURO SATO	Director - International Service
FUMIO KOSUKA	Auto Dealing
ATSUSHI WAKAMATSU	Journalist
RUDY YOSHIZAWA	Family Consultant
JOSELITO O. CARINO	Academician Professor
TOSHIAKI TANAKA	IT Consultant
KOICHI KAWAMURA	Manpower Services
JUN SUZUKI	Magician

Political summit set May 3-5

By Juliet L. Javellana

THE RULING party Lakas and its partner Nationalist People's Coalition and the opposition Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino yesterday agreed to hold a national political summit on May 3-5 this year.

Speaker Jose de Venecia, who initiated the idea, said the summit of all political parties would promote political unity and draft a common strategy for economic prosperity.

House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla, who belongs to the LDP, said the summit would also tackle ways to "strengthen the political system."

But Padilla said the parties would avoid "contentious issues" such as amending the Constitution to shift to a parliamentary system of government because this would generate divisiveness.

Noel Albano, the Speaker's spokesperson, said the political parties are expected to issue a joint communique at the end of the summit.

Albano said De Venecia met for two hours yesterday with LDP president Sen. Edgardo Angara and Tarlac Rep. Gilbert Teodoro, leader of businessman Eduardo Cojuangco's NPC.

Also present were Padilla and Rep. Enrique Garcia of LDP and Rep. Robert Ace Barbers of Lakas.

"The conference should send a major signal that the political leaders of this country, realizing that we are lagging behind our neighbors, should now get together and set a common strategy for the future," De Venecia said in a statement.

De Venecia proposed the political summit in December last year, after opposition Sen. Blas Ople proposed the holding of the economic summit.

De Venecia had said the summit would "remove the poison in the political atmosphere," prompting the opposition to seek more specific and acceptable agenda.

Albano said De Venecia, Angara and Teodoro agreed that the summit could be the forum to forge a common strategy for the creation of jobs, agricultural modernization and food security, infrastructure and modernization of ports and railways and realizing the dream of turning Mindanao into the country's food basket.

Albano said the political leaders also agreed to forge a consensus to push the covenants reached during the economic summit last December.

Padilla said it was agreed during yesterday's meeting that an organizing committee and secretariat would be set up to work on the nitty-gritty of the summit.

He said it was initially agreed that a maximum of five party representatives would be invited to the summit or all-party conference led by the party president or chair and other senior leaders and staff "who shall be named to the different discussion groups" during the three-day affair.

Padilla earlier raised the question of whether ousted President Joseph Estrada would be invited to attend the summit.

Padilla said the Partido ng Masang Pilipino, Estrada's political party, is qualified to participate in the summit and that Estrada should be invited.

"I mentioned that (during the meeting that) if we define the size of the party (that would be invited), the PMP can fit and it might not be a political summit if the head (Estrada) is not there," Padilla said.

But Padilla acknowledged that it would be difficult to arrange for Estrada's presence in the summit because it would require the permission of the Sandiganbayan, not to mention the security requirements.

RP to boost math, science education

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday her government would boost instruction in math, science and English in the educational system to make the Philippines more competitive in the information technology age.

"We need to improve on these basic subjects to enable us to compete in the 21st century because our competitive advantage lies in IT (information technology)," Ms Macapagal told dzRH radio here. AFP

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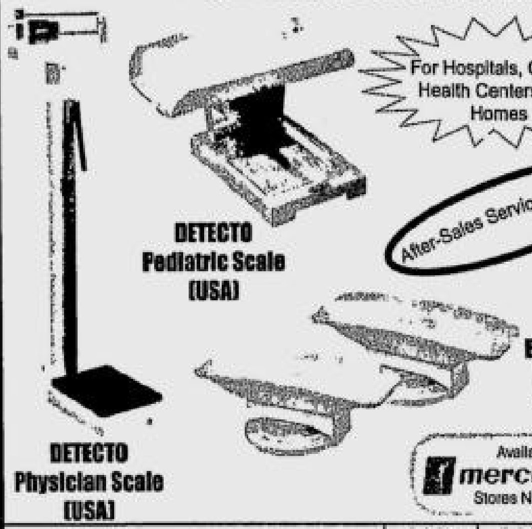

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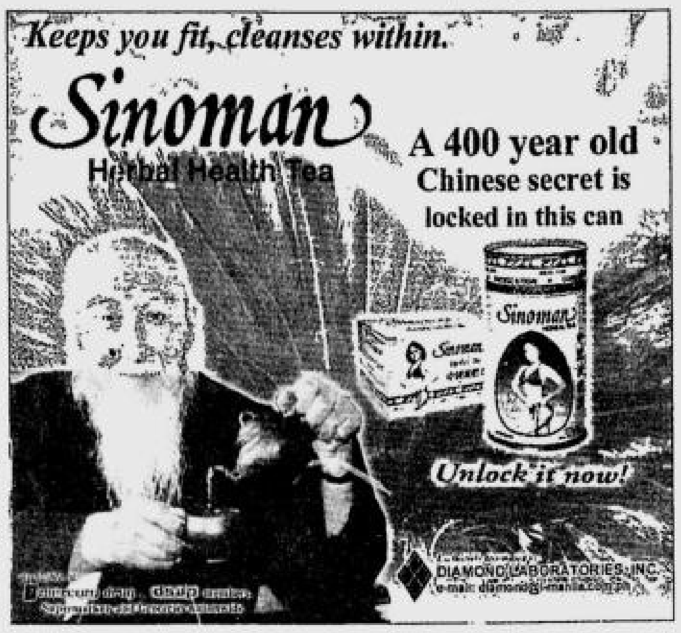

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Comelec to appeal Photokina ruling

THE COMMISSION on Elections refused to give up in its fight with the Photokina-led consortium over the controversial Voters Registration and Identification System (VRIS) even after losing the battle in a Quezon City court.

Comelec chair Alfredo Benipayo said he would elevate the matter to the Supreme Court and would not wait for an en banc resolution recommending the move.

Benipayo said he was leaving everything to the Office of the Solicitor General as the Comelec stands to lose billions from its budget for modernization if it would honor the contract with the consortium.

"I will not bring this to the en banc, because the four commissioners are allied with Photokina. How about the three of us who do not approve of the VRIS?" Benipayo said.

"We will contest this. We will question the ruling at the Supreme Court," he said. "The Solicitor General is already working on the next legal step."

Commissioners Luz Tancangco, Mehol Sadain, Ralph Lantion and Rufino Javier have been excluded from the complaint filed by Photokina before the QC Regional Trial Court Branch 215.

The four commissioners had approved the VRIS and voted to honor the bid award given to Photokina and its partners Unisys, Sagem S.A., IBM Phils., Polaroid and Headstrong in October 2000.

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Abu leaders sick, want to surrender, says Basilan gov

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon and his two brothers, Sahinon and Bakil, have sent surrender feelers with a pledge to free two American hostages and a Filipino nurse.

And Abu Sabaya, leader of the Abu Sayyaf band, who originally kidnapped Martin and Gracia Burnham and Lamitan nurse Ediborah Yap, is sick and unable to walk far.

But military officials were skeptical about these revelations by Basilan Gov. Wahab Akbar yesterday, saying the bandits always send surrender feelers every time they are under pressure from pursuing troops.

"They're very tired in the mountains. They have nothing to eat and they're getting sick. In fact, Abu Sabaya's testicles are swelling and he is unable to walk far," Akbar told the INQUIRER in Tagalog.

Akbar said it was Sabaya's serious health problem that prompted him to turn over the captives to the Hapilon brothers.

However, Col. Alexander Aleo, commander of the Army's 103rd Brigade commander, was skeptical.

Aleo said the surrender feelers could be a tactic so that military pressure against the bandit group would ease.

"I am not optimistic with this surrender issue, it is seldom realized, they have sent several feelers in the past when there was extreme military pressure. It's just a tactical ploy," Aleo said.

But Akbar said the latest feelers were real, although he would not elaborate. He said an emissary should be sent to finalize the surrender.

"Definitely not me because I don't want to be under suspicion again," he said.

Military sources said while Akbar was still suggesting that an emissary be named, his sister have already started talking with the bandit leaders.

The same sources said Rajam Akbar is related by affinity with Isnilon. ***Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Release of Korean, partner hampered by pursuing troops

PALEMBANG, Sultan Kudarat—The main negotiator for the release of the kidnapped South Korean and General Santos businessman said military operations were hampering the release of the hostages.

The emissary, who introduced himself as Mike Macmod, was sent by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front upon the request of the government to secure the freedom of Jae Keon-yoon and his business partner Carlos Belonio.

He went to Barangay Malisbong here to establish contact with the group of Commander Tigre, principal suspect in the Feb. 6 kidnapping.

Macmod was authorized by Ghazali Jaafar, MILF political affairs chief, and was named as negotiator for the release of Jae and Belonio after Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza sought the help of the rebel group.

Macmod and Tigre's men met Tuesday afternoon and then in the evening, but he returned empty-handed.

The emissary returned to Malisbong about 9 a.m. on Wednesday and told mayor Labualas Samroud Mamansual of Palembang that he failed to penetrate the area for fear of being caught in the crossfire.

"He told me it would be hard for him to meet Tigre while there is an ongoing military operation," Jaafar told the INQUIRER.

The military operation, launched by the 601st Brigade under Col. Pedrito Magsino, earlier captured one of the kidnappers.

Mamansual said at least 300 families were displaced as soldiers scoured the hinterlands of Palembang to locate and rescue the victims.

Most of the evacuees fled their homes Tuesday evening after a firefight erupted between soldiers and some 50 heavily armed men allegedly led by Tigre.

A military attack helicopter also dropped bombs on sitio Linikas, an identified stronghold of the kidnappers.

Molon Barangay Captain Abdulkarim Mosadi told the INQUIRER more than 200 residents from his barangay left their home because of the encounter.

The evacuees arrived in Malisbong bringing along with them some of their personal belongings and farm animals.

In Barangay Butril, 25 families with about 145 members were displaced by the ongoing operation.

Mamansual said he ordered the social welfare office to assist the victims, including those who fled barangays Badiangon and Klobe.

Magsino, however, maintained that no civilians were displaced due to the military operations.

"We told them (civilians) not to leave their homes. Our targets are the kidnappers, not the civilians," Magsino said.

He aired suspicion that the kidnappers themselves were instigating the civilians to evacuate "to create a scenario that tension gripped the area."

Mamansual said residents of Palembang were angry and have blamed Tigre's group for the trouble and bad publicity caused by the kidnapping incident.

Magsino admitted that furious residents burned the house of Commander Tigre in Klobe on Saturday last week.

"Because of the manhunt operation, people could hardly work in the farm. Instead of tilling the field, they are in the evacuation centers waiting for the government to feed them. This kidnapping is exacerbating the economic misery of the local residents," Mamansual said.

Magsino said the operations would continue despite the negotiations. ***Aquiles Z. Zonio with a report from Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, February 15, 2002
Friday after Ash Wednesday
1st Reading: Is 58:1-9
Gospel: Mt 9:14-15

The disciples of John came to Jesus with the question, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast on many occasions, but not your disciples?"

Jesus answered them, "How can you expect wedding guests to mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? Time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, then they will fast."

Commentary

Voluntary fasting, except for health purposes, seems to have lost meaning today. It's a form of prayer, which says: "Life is God's gift. The food sustaining my life is God's gift too. But I cannot live on food alone. I need the gifts, but I long even more for the Giver." There are times we experience that God is with us, as the disciples did when they were with Jesus. So why fast when the "more" we long for is there?

Isaiah expands the theology of fasting. Do you long for God? Then face what separates us most from God: unjust relationships. Do you long for the Giver of all good? Restore right relationships, for where love is, God is. "Fast by sharing your food with the hungry, bringing to your house the homeless...then you will call and God will answer, you will cry and God will say, 'I'm here.'"

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Baguio trader abducted, slain

BAGUIO CITY—Police here are investigating whether the remnants of the Bagis Gang may have been responsible for the abduction and murder of a local businessman last Wednesday.

Police intelligence agents here said members of the Bagis Gang, whose core members were killed in a shootout with policemen last week in Pangasinan, may have abducted and murdered Eufemio Gonzalo, 41, a Baguio-based businessman dealing in construction aggregates.

His driver, Wilmar Mabilac, 22, escaped despite being shot by the suspects in the nape. Mabilac is now under heavy security at the Baguio General Hospital.

Gonzalo's body was found on Wednesday in an abandoned house owned by Antonio Fernandez at Barangay Taloy Sur in Tuba, Benguet.

Police sources said a caller from Barangay Pico in La Trinidad, Benguet, called Gonzalo on Wednesday and ordered sand.

Mabilac said the customer specifically requested that Gonzalo pass through the Longlong circumferential road.

On their way to La Trinidad, six men aboard a green Mitsubishi L-300 van blocked the maroon Isuzu Elf truck that Mabilac was driving. The suspects then forced Gonzalo and Mabilac into the van and were taken to Taloy Sur.

Mabilac said the suspects took Gonzalo's P22,000. He said Gonzalo and one of the suspects had an argument and Gonzalo was then brought to house's toilet where he was shot.

His body bore a bullet wound in the neck.

Mabilac said the suspects shot him but he escaped and reported the abduction to the Tuba police. ***Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

SUPREME COURT GUIDELINES

LABOR LAW (LABOR RELATIONS LAW)—Employee's dismissal to be valid—For an employee's dismissal to be valid, two requirements must be met: first, the employee must be afforded due process, i.e., he must be given an opportunity to be heard and to defend himself, and second, the dismissal must be for a valid cause. The burden of proving that the dismissal of the employee was for a valid and authorized cause rests on the employer and the employer's failure to discharge such burden would mean that the dismissal was not justified and therefore illegal. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Kapunan, First Division, Concorde Hotel v. Court of Appeals, G. R. No. 144089, August 9, 2001]

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Gloria explains why Pag-Ibig chief was fired

By Carlito Pablo

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said she had to let go of Pag-Ibig president Manuel Crisostomo as an act of exercising discipline in her government.

Crisostomo was fired as head of the housing fund agency upon the recommendation of Michael Defensor, chair of the Housing and Urban Coordinating Council, because of his open opposition to the move to place Pag-Ibig under the proposed Department of Housing.

Crisostomo, a career official, was replaced by former Pag-Ibig deputy chief executive officer Miro Quimbo.

"I cannot have anarchy within the government," President Macapagal said in an interview over dzMM.

In a chance interview with Palace reporters, Ms Macapagal confirmed it was Defensor who "recommended that I appoint another president."

"We have to be a team," she said. "And it's too bad because Crisostomo is a good man."

The President also said that Crisostomo will be placed in a pool of career executive service officers so that other government agencies may take him in.

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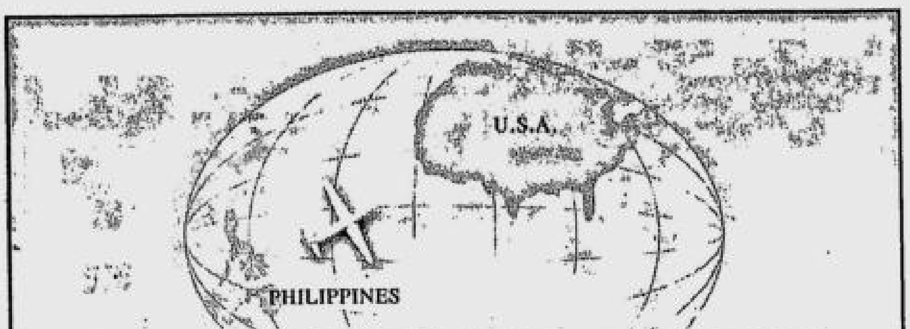

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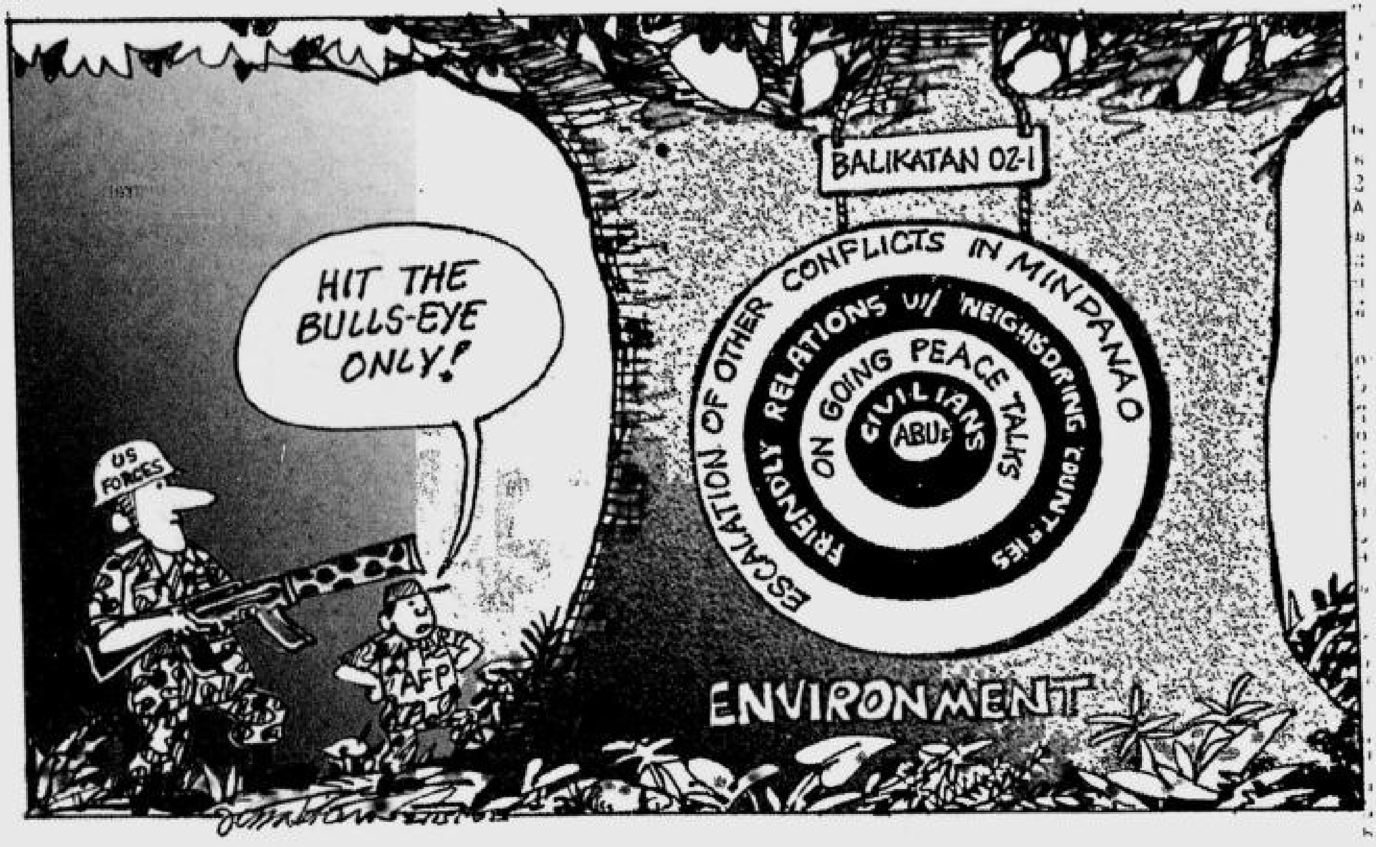


EDITORIALS

ROTC reforms

WITHOUT fanfare, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has introduced reforms in the National Service Act, the program that compels male college students to perform service for the state. The chief reform is that the service is not anymore exclusively for the Reserved Officers Training Corps program. At the start of the second semester, several colleges have been allowed to offer alternatives such as law enforcement and civic welfare services.

If it's any indication of the widespread and deep-seated hatred for the ROTC, droves of male students quickly applied for the alternative programs. So in demand were the other programs that in many instances, schools had to impose a ceiling on successful applicants.

The changes had been spurred by the celebrated murder of Mark Chua, a cadet officer of the University of Santo Tomas who exposed before the school paper, The Varsitarian, the corruption of the Department of Military Science and Tactics (DMST), the agency under the defense department and the Armed Forces of the Philippines that oversees the ROTC. The exposé resulted in the relief of the top ROTC brass of the school. Oddly enough, when the new commandant arrived, he promptly reinstated several of the cadet officers whom the former commandant had relieved for being implicated in the complaint. That was small comfort for Chua, whose body was found last March in the Pasig River, hogtied and gagged. Witnesses have implicated the reinstated officers to the murder.

The brazenness and brutality of the murder were such that the University Belt Consortium led by UST and the Far Eastern University and whose members include the Manuel L. Quezon University, the school named after "the father of the ROTC," issued a trenchant statement, "Excising a Cancer," which sounded the death knell for the program. Many had interpreted the statement as a sweeping call to abolish the ROTC. In fact, at the start of the school year, students all over Metro Manila boycotted the ROTC in dramatic fashion, compelling executive and legislative officials to consider seriously the fate of the ROTC.

But the consortium did not ask for the abolition of the ROTC as a reservist force at the beck and call of the motherland. It asked for the abolition of the law that makes the ROTC a compulsory requirement for graduation by male college students. Certainly the consortium would welcome other programs that would better realize the requirements of the National Service Act.

To be sure, the ROTC all these years has monopolized the National Service program and accordingly displayed the worst features of monopolies: incompetence, corruption, abuse, and lately, even murder. With the introduction of new programs, it will be forced to compete and to shape up.

Not enough

BUT reforms should not stop at the introduction of new programs. What is not too well known is that even if students can have a pick of civic welfare, law enforcement or military training, they still have to report to the ROTC brass. In short, even the civilian or non-military programs of the National Service Act are still under the DMST, which holds sole responsibility for allowing the ROTC to grow into the monster it has become.

The President should be sensitive to public opinion and remove the National Service program from the defense department and the AFP. At the least, she should form an interagency committee to implement the military and non-military programs of the National Service Act. But this may be far-fetched, considering the President's particular attentiveness to her generals.

Therefore, Congress should pass a new law that will enact the democratization and demilitarization of the National Service program. The law may incorporate the presidential reforms done so far, introduce new programs (a Senate bill seeks to involve the students in environmental work, relief and rehabilitation, civil defense, livelihood promotion, teaching assistance in public education, even desk and field work in national and local offices), and, most important, place this important program under an inter-agency committee beyond the exclusive jurisdiction of military mind-sets.

Talisay and mahogany trees bring autumn to RP

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

IT'S autumn in the Philippines! It's really the beginning of summer but if you look at the talisay and mahogany trees, you'd swear it is autumn. The leaves of the talisay trees—those big, broad leaves with rounded tips—are turning yellow, red and rust, and then falling to the ground. And the leaves of the mahogany trees—those majestic trees that the Department of Public Works and Highways are massacring on Quezon Avenue, Quezon City—are falling in great numbers, leaving bare branches and twigs as if it is winter. Some leaves of santol trees also turn red but not many.

We are in the tropics where there are only two seasons, dry and wet. There is no fall or spring here, so why are the leaves of the talisay trees turning red and yellow and why are the mahogany trees shedding their leaves?

Most likely, they originated in temperate countries and they still retain the characteristics of trees in temperate regions. Shedding leaves is one way trees—with the exception of the evergreens—get through the bitter cold of winter. In autumn, the intensity of the sun's rays lessens and the temperature drops. The trees sense this. Sugar in the tree sap increases and the chlorophyll which makes the leaves green disappear. With the green gone, the yellows and reds and the colors in-between become prominent. And you have the autumn colors.

The autumn colors turn the mountains and countryside of the American East Coast into a riot of colors. The colors attract hordes of tourists. There are Leaf Tours in the New England states, particularly in Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut, where tourists pay good money to tramp through the woods and ogle trees.

The deepening cold prompts the leaves to break off at the nodes and fall to earth, carpeting the ground with a thick layer of leaves. The trees thrust bare branches to the sky. They're ready to sleep through the winter and they don't need the leaves and the chlorophyll to manufacture plant food for them.

This is what is happening to the talisay and mahogany trees. But what prompts them to do it? There is neither deepening cold nor lessening sunlight to give them the signal to go to sleep. Is there a time clock inside them that tells them to shed their leaves? But it is not autumn in the northern temperate regions where they came from. It is the beginning of summer. It won't be autumn until September. So why are they behaving in the Philippine summer as though it is autumn?

Why are the talisay and mahogany trees behaving differently from the other tropical trees and plants that are instead beginning to hang out their flowers? The lowly kakawati trees are blooming with their pink blossoms, putting to shame the famous elite Japanese cherry blossoms that signal the spring tourist season. If somebody were to plant kakawati trees around a pond or cover a whole mountain with it, they can be a tourist attraction in five years or less. It would be so easy to reforest bald mountains with kakawati. You stick a twig into the ground and it grows. It is hardy and resists drought. Even if the surrounding area is burned to the ground, new shoots will sprout from a kakawati trunk when the rains fall. Even kakawati trunks already cut and displayed for sale send out buds. They want so much to continue living.

And once it begins to bear blossoms, the kakawati becomes self-perpetuating. The flowers ripen into brown pods that pop in the heat of summer, scattering seeds that germinate with the first rains of May. If a branch breaks off during a storm and falls to the ground, it will start to grow and soon becomes another tree. The Bureau of Forestry is overlooking a good material for reforestation: the kakawati. What's more, it is very beautiful when it blooms.

The bougainvilleas and other plants are also beginning to unfurl their flowers in preparation for summer. But the talisay and mahogany trees are preparing to go to sleep.

With their colorful and falling leaves, they make it look like its autumn. But it won't be long. In a matter of weeks, they will make it look like it's spring. Buds will break out of their bare branches, the tiny leaves will open and grow and soon the trees will be luxuriant with leaves again. Then they will bear blossoms that will ripen into fruits and seeds.

The big seeds of the talisay are wrapped in yellow-green coats. They are very hard, like nuts, and can last a long time, nature's way of making sure that more talisay trees will grow. In contrast, the mahogany seeds are small. They ripen in brown pods that pop open in the heat. The seeds, attached to helicopter-like blades, float down and away like squadrons of helicopters participating in the Balikatan war exercises, one more of nature's ways of spreading the seeds and propagating the species.

Next February, their leaves will turn yellow-red-rust-brown and fall to earth again. And they will make it seem as if it's autumn again in the Philippines.

* * *

KAPIHAN NOTES: Subject of next Monday's Kapihan sa Manila (Hotel) forum is the stormy confirmation hearings for Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho. Invited guests are Senate President Franklin Drilon, Majority Leader and mother to be (again) Loren Legarda, Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., and Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta.

Country music

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

"CONTINENTAL Divide" is one of my favorite movies. It tells the story of a hardboiled columnist who is sent to the wilds by his newspaper when his life is threatened by someone he has stepped on. A jaded and half-cynical urbanite and journalist—a lethal combination—he at first resents his exile, feeling deprived of his natural environment, which is the seamy side of the city. But he falls head over heels in love with an environmentalist who is in the same place studying the natural habitats of birds. He soon starts rhapsodizing about the country, to the great chagrin of his boss. His boss begs him to come home posthaste and do what he does best, which is write about crime and grime.

For quite some time, "Continental Divide"—a wonderful title, suggesting divides of all sorts—put up a mirror to my own life. I too have always thought I could not breathe without the professional oxygen of the seamy side of the city. Which, not quite incidentally, is to be found more in the well-scrubbed floors of government buildings and those of Ayala than in the dark alleys of Tondo and Sampaloc. I lived in the province for 13 years of my life, which were my growing-up years, and I've thought the province was now just a memory. Staying for extended periods there seemed an imposition. Living there was out of the question.

But a couple of weeks ago, I found occasion to revise that opinion. What drove me out of Metro Manila was not a threat to life of the mayhem kind, but was so in quite another respect, and not entirely a metaphorical one. It was the wear and tear of life in Metro Manila, the kind produced by monstrous traffic, the constant (and now very real) threat of crime and pollution, both of the air and of national thinking. The latter you see in President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's version of "you're for American troops or the Abu Sayyaf," which is as polluted a kind of thinking as you can hope to get. But the polluted air is just as bad, or lethal. The grime and slime of the city may offer professional oxygen, but it severely depletes the physical one.

I had been feeling all sorts of aches and pains for some time, and was wondering whether to see a doctor. On a sudden inspiration, I decided instead to abandon Metro Manila, if not for the wilds, at least for something remotely resembling it. I thought the better part of fortitude was respite, and drove the seven hours or so to Naga City on a seven-year-old car, imagining it was my own 21st-century version of "Travels with My Donkey." It turned out to be the best idea I've had in years.

Back of my mind, I of course knew what the source of my aches and pains was. I had seen it in others, but not in myself, the latter always being the hardest to do. It was being worn down to a frazzle, also called stress. I've always had this theory that the body unconsciously adjusts to the rhythm of a place, and given one that was slower and more harmonious, my body would internalize it in no time. I spent nearly a couple of weeks in Naga City, and I can now confidently proclaim that that theory is eminently valid. Almost overnight, the aches and pains went, notwithstanding that seeing old friends and meeting new acquaintances made for spirited nights. And almost miraculously, my indulgences did not meet with immediate retribution in the form of gout. I almost dreaded coming back.

Indeed, the experience provided more than just rejuvenation, it provided reflection on the differential allures of life in the city and country. The allure of life in the city has diminished tremendously over time for me, aided in no small way by its not very small—and ever increasing—daily oppressions. During my last visit to Naga on the other hand, the allure of living outside Metro Manila suddenly grew tremendously.

Technology has made it possible to escape—yes, escape—Metro Manila with relative impunity. You have a computer and are assured of a telephone line, you can live anywhere in this country. Or at least stay there for extended periods, and (re)discover its subtle charms. The Internet has made it possible to access information in any part of the globe, quite apart from Metro Manila, so there's no reason you can't do your work there. Even for journalists. The notion that you're far from where the action is reflects far less on the extent of the deprivation than on the silliness of a Manila-centric conception of news, or what is important in national life.

It was actually Gardy Labad who gave me a glimpse of that option a couple of years ago. Labad it was who won year after year in movie scoring in the 1970s, who later spent intermittently long years in the United States plying his art or craft there. He came home to his hometown in Bohol five or so years ago, and was bowled over by its magic. It felt like seeing the place for the first time. He has stayed there since, applying his energies to putting the place on the world map musically, which is not an exaggeration when you hear the Loboc children's choir. He is convinced that fateful visit home was divinely inspired.

Not being as divinely inspired as him—my inspirations are largely secular—I do not know that my last visit to my own hometown was providential. I do know it has set me, as Fagin says in Oliver Twist, "reviewing my situation." I don't know that I'm ready to take the plunge, which has all the magic and enormity of falling in love, or better or worse, committing marriage, but who knows, I may yet surprise myself one of these days.

Some Filipinos like to leave for the United States to escape Metro Manila, others like to leave for the province to do so. Except for the Strand and a few other places in New York, I should think the latter preference is by far the healthier in mind and body.

* * *

Comments are welcome at dequiros@vasia.com

Showdown

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE COMMISSION on Appointments on Wednesday steered clear of a showdown over the confirmation of the nomination of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho by not submitting it to a vote in a plenary session.

Senate President Franklin Drilon described the move as avoiding bloodletting and allowing a cooling off, but the score on the ground is that Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta was poised to invoke Article 20 of the commission's rules. The article allows a member to defer consideration of nomination, without debate. If this had been invoked last Wednesday, it would have delayed until March 13 a plenary vote on the nomination.

Oreta is allowed to invoke Article 20 only once, and other opposition senators, in relay, can delay confirmation, but no Commission on Appointments member can invoke it in the last week of the current session of Congress. The problem is whether other opposition senators would join her in the rear-guard filibuster, but if the 14-1 (the lone opposing vote is Oreta's) in the finance committee of the commission endorsing the confirmation of Camacho in the plenary session were an indication, a number of opposition senators are dissociating themselves from her filibuster. A simple majority is needed to approve a nomination in the plenary; the commission has 25 members from both houses of Congress.

The vote indicates that the administration allies in Congress have the numbers to confirm Camacho, but they are apparently allowing Oreta and other opposition members to let off steam. Camacho was quite willing to face a showdown vote on Wednesday, if only to know who are for him and who are not for him. For all intents and purposes, the showdown will occur in the last week of the session, allowing the administration to consolidate its numbers and the opposition to make hay with the entry of former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, as an expert intervenor recruited by the opposition.

Enrile has alleged that Camacho, as well as the principals of Code-NGO which won a contract to float PEACe bonds, could be liable to charges of plunder. The opposition has been fueling the Senate inquiry into the PEACe bonds transaction in an effort to link Camacho directly to the deal through insinuations that he intervened to favor Code-NGO, headed by his sister, Marissa Camacho-Reyes.

Whether or not the transaction was irregular or was rent-seeking or Camacho had intervened, these issues are now at the center of the debate by experts in the business world. Enrile claims he is a taxation expert, but a more credible expert, former prime minister and finance secretary Cesar Virata, has issued a statement that Enrile does not know what he is talking about. Between Enrile and Virata, I would punt for the latter.

In the field of experts, most have seen nothing irregular in the transaction, and they disagree with the claim that the government had lost several billions of pesos in prospective taxes. They claim that Enrile's computations are erroneous and based on incorrect assumptions.

I am in no position to add anything more substantial than what the experts have said, but the all-out support of the business and banking community for Camacho's confirmation indicates that it does not share the conclusion that the bond issue was a "sham" deal. Businessmen know better and they can smell a rat a mile away. This is a case where businessmen and politicians don't share the same perceptions on a deal, and this time, they want Camacho's nomination confirmed not only because they see nothing irregular about the transaction but also they believe he is doing a good job in the Cabinet.

The foreign, as well as the local, business communities are making a stand on Camacho, quite in contrast to their withdrawal of confidence in former President Joseph Estrada, not only because they perceive he is doing a good job but because they are nervous that if the politicians succeed in blocking the appointment, this would be a sign that the Macapagal administration does not have the political will to assert its authority and has no capacity to protect its strongest assets in the Cabinet from being massacred by politicians.

The nominations of some of the Cabinet members have been stalled in the commission, but President Macapagal cannot defend all of them. Some are indefensible and she could sacrifice them and leave them to their own devices. But there are two Cabinet members on which the President is prepared to put her political fortunes on the line—Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Camacho. Reyes was a key figure in the withdrawal of military allegiance from former President Estrada, causing his administration's collapse, and Camacho is head of the economic team.

The President depends on Reyes to protect her administration from efforts to destabilize it, and Camacho is well-regarded in the local business community and overseas investors. The fate of the Macapagal administration and her prospects of being reelected in 2004 depend very much on her economic management performance. The economy is an area where she is winning slowly the battle to revive the economy and she is likely to be judged on the basis of economic results in the long term. Her robust policy against terrorism, drawing American troops in the training of Filipino soldiers in the fight against the Abu Sayyaf, is winning wide public opinion support. Thus, her policy on the joint military exercises and Camacho have come under heavy fire. The showdown in the Commission on Appointments over Camacho is merely the skirmishes of the battle over economic recovery.

Two women

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SHORTLY after taking office as mayor of Butuan City, Daisy Plaza became the object of rather malicious and, I dare say, lascivious attacks from radio commentators. "But I knew, having been the wife of a politician, that withstanding personal attacks had to be taken as just part of the job," she says.

That is, until her only daughter, 13, came home from school one day in tears. Her classmates, the girl said, were asking her why her mother was allowing the "Bombo Radyo" commentators to say all those awful things about her. Maybe they were true?

"That was when I decided that enough was enough," says Daisy. Her staff, it turns out, had been monitoring the broadcasts and prepared transcripts of the commentary. Daisy filed suit for libel against the commentators, one of whom was the station manager.

You judge if these statements are indeed libelous: "Your brain is in your feet." "Your brain is filled with cholesterol." "Why don't you just go home and make more children? (the Plazas have eight children, seven boys and a girl), that's all you're good for anyway." "Mayor, just spread your legs and start diddling with yourself." (They sound even more distasteful in Visayan.)

Her husband the former mayor, says Daisy, was never the target of such personal abuse during his three terms in office. Why then are their political opponents bent on such a campaign of vilification against her? Well, Daisy by now should realize that women politicians are particularly vulnerable to such attacks, since impugning a woman's "virtue" is a favorite tactic of men, from sexual harassers to radio commentators.

* * *

THE RADIO station in question, though, is turning the libel case and subsequent developments into an issue of press freedom.

Part of Mayor Daisy's overall vision, she says, is the drawing up of a comprehensive land use and zoning plan for Butuan City. It was in the course of drawing up such a plan that City Hall discovered that dxBR, the station in question, had failed to secure the proper permits for its transmitter, which stands in a residential area along the highway. Instead, it only had a temporary users permit, and after the deadline expired, the city government chose not to renew the permit. Ordered to vacate its present location, the radio commentators have instead chosen to fight it out, citing "press freedom," and crying harassment.

Joining in the campaign is a tabloid, which began publishing only after Mayor Daisy's assumption to office and has since attacked her in every issue. Recently, the printing press where the tabloid is printed was raided by the police. The tabloid staff has denounced this as yet another instance of harassment, but Mayor Daisy says the police just informed her about the raid, citing reports that the press had been printing illegal materials including *"masiao"* (as *jueteng* is known in Mindanao) tips.

So, is press freedom threatened in Butuan? "I've already sued for libel, and that is all the action I have taken against them," says Mayor Daisy of her critics. The media community in Butuan and elsewhere might do well to study the issue deeper before rushing to the defense of foul-mouthed commentators.

* * *

Ramon Magsaysay Jr. recently wrote to appeal for help in behalf of Veronika "Baby" Bueno, who has been languishing in a Hong Kong jail since 1998 for the alleged manslaughter of her Swiss husband.

In his appeal to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, "Jun" Magsaysay also urged the Department of Foreign Affairs, and Vice President and Foreign Secretary Teofisto Guingona, to appeal with the Hong Kong government for the release and repatriation of Bueno to the Philippines on humanitarian grounds. Bueno, a native of Sta. Cruz, Zambales, was accused, tried and convicted in Hong Kong for allegedly killing her abusive Swiss husband in December 1997. "Ms. Bueno's family has been appealing to our government to review her case. It is our belief that she was wrongfully accused and she merely acted in self-defense," Magsaysay said.

In her letter to the senator, Bueno said, "I was shocked and greatly disappointed (with the sentence). I knew full well that I would have to carry the stigma with me for the rest of my life for something I did not do. I was the victim of the deceased individual and his sense of vengeance and retribution. One of the last things he told me is that I would either die with him or die in prison. Now I was challenged by a system that valued his life over mine."

* * *

WHAT makes Baby Bueno's appeal even more urgent is that she is suffering from serious ailments. Bueno, 52, is currently suffering from partial paralysis, duodenal ulcer, and arachnoid cyst in the left side of her brain. She has already served four years of a 10-year sentence. Magsaysay said the Zambaleña has already exhausted all her financial resources and is "at the end of her options" unless the Philippine and Hong Kong governments find at least a measure of compassion for her.

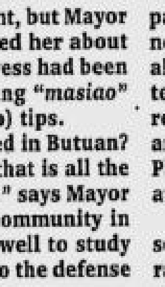
Though not an OFW, Bueno now finds herself substantially in the same situation as Sarah Balabagan, who found herself imprisoned after defending herself from her employer who attempted to rape her; and Flor Contemplacion, confronting a foreign justice system and seeking the support of her home government before it's too late.

If you will recall, it was the execution of Contemplacion that plunged the Ramos administration into its first major crisis, resulting in the forced resignation of two Cabinet secretaries.

Learning how to paint in Madrid

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo



PEOPLE who know, or at least pretend to know Philippine art, always speak highly of 19th century painters Juan Luna and Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo. While it is natural to speak in hushed tones and judge these painters according to their best work, we tend to ignore sloppy canvasses which are sometimes declared fakes by experts. Luna and Hidalgo cannot be expected to paint marvelously every day, sometimes they probably woke up with a hangover, were tormented by insomnia, or even had bad hair days. Studying them at their best and worst is the best way to learn perspective and appreciate their craft. Over the years I have consciously looked at the pre-1884 works of these masters, each time growing fascinated by the first glimmer of genius, the clumsy attempts toward something grand like the prize-winning "Spoliarium" or the "Christian Virgins Exposed to the Mob."

In the National Museum, we have Luna's student work, small oil studies, practically a visual notebook of Pompeii in the late 19th century. These can tell us not only how he worked but what colors he used, and how, for example, he drew heads. More importantly, these works reflect the type of training he had first in the Academy in Manila and later in Madrid. I have often wondered how different or similar fine arts training was in the time of Luna to that of Arturo Luz.

Of course, Luna and his classmates were made to copy copies of European master paintings. We can see one example in the Lopez Memorial Museum an early Luna depicting the head of the Virgin Mary. Luna copied this from a painting of the Immaculate Conception by Murillo. In the original, copied on countless *estampitas*, the Virgin is so sweet she can give you diabetes on sight, but Luna painted her with a dark background and made her fat. While it is not a pleasing canvas, it is wonderful to a historian because here, Luna is shown learning to paint, struggling to round off the Virgin's face resulting in a look I only see on people who either have mumps or food in their mouth. This canvas made me dig up a letter of Luna's contemporary, Hidalgo, written in Madrid in 1879 and addressed to his friends Glicerio Anzon and Jose Rizal. It is a simple letter—nothing nationalistic or historically important—that describes his art classes in Madrid:

"You have us here as students of the [Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid] attending all classes of its School of Fine Arts. We entered our classes with a certain insecurity, a bit of apprehension [*poco de mieditis*], but all this fear left us as soon as we saw the work of our classmates here. On the other hand we were greatly disappointed because we would have wanted to have classmates who had more mettle than the ones now attending the school because they could have served as a stimulus to us."

Hidalgo is disappointed by school. Unlike Luna who dropped out and made a name for himself in spite of school, Hidalgo trudges on describing his typical day as follows:

"Our professor in the class of ancient painting and drapery from eight to ten in the morning is Mr. Espalter; in that of coloring and composition from ten to twelve noon, Mr. Federico Madrazo; in that of pictorial anatomy [that is, anatomy based on prints and replicas] from one to two in the afternoon, Mr. Ignacio llanos. [Siesta follows from two to six in the afternoon followed by one last class], that of drawing from life [or figure drawing] from 6:30 to 8:30 in the evening, Mr. Carlos Ribera.

"They are all very good professors, but you can be very sure that what you can study there [in the Academia de Dibujo y Pintura in Manila] under Mr. Agustin Saez is exactly the same as what is taught here, neither more nor less, with the difference that there you paint and draw much more comfortably than we do here. Because [in Manila] you have the entire hall at your disposal, while we here can hardly pick up a bad corner, often enveloped in darkness, and we have to stretch our necks to see the model who, literally and figuratively, is almost always quite poor, though very suitable for the study of the deviations of the human form."

From the above, one notes that the training in Manila is at par or even better than that given in Madrid. One could probably learn how to draw and paint in Manila but the inspiration of being in Europe was its own reward:

"I do not want to tell you about the [Museo del Prado] because I have no more time. I will only tell you that it contains the most valuable collection of paintings, more than three thousand, that is found in Europe. One leaves that building with a headache and despair in the soul, because one is convinced of the little he knows, that one is not even an atom compared with those giants of art....Give very many regards on my behalf to my fellow martyrs of painting, including the amateurs, and pardon this badly written letter because I am very tired after eight hours of work daily and besides, I have to answer eight more letters..."

Who says the Philippines was a backward Spanish colony? In some respects, Luna and Hidalgo were already formed in Manila long before they won recognition for themselves and their countrymen in Spain in 1884.

* * *

Comments are welcome at ambeth@admu.edu.ph

The issue is the Philippine military

COMMENTARY

Howie G. Severino

LATE last year, a group of US government personnel arrived at Andrews Air Base in Zamboanga City to follow up a rumor that the Burnham couple held hostage by the Abu Sayyaf would soon be delivered by the military. It was another false rumor. As he looked out at the empty air field, one American told me almost under his breath, "They must be so tired and hungry. How many months have the Burnhams been in Basilan?" he said, slowly counting off in answering his own question, "One, two, three, four, five, six months...Those Abu Sayyaf guys must be pretty good."

It was a sarcastic way of saying, your military guys are pretty lousy.

Nationalists can howl all they want. But the US forces probably would not be in the South at all if the Philippine military had not proven incapable of rescuing hostages and capturing the Abu Sayyaf's leadership. It may have dawned on US planners by now that no matter how much high-tech weaponry and training they can deliver, the Philippine military is a lost cause unless it undergoes drastic reforms. Otherwise, some of that dazzling "Made in USA" night vision equipment could end up being bought by the Abu Sayyaf itself.

The debate over constitutional issues has overshadowed a more immediate question to the communities threatened by the Abu Sayyaf: Why has the Philippine military repeatedly failed in its mission?

Much of the fight against the Abu Sayyaf has been conducted in the jungles of Basilan and Jolo, away from the eyes of reporters. But there was at least one time that the military did have a chance to publicly display its ineffectiveness in combat—in the center of town in Lamitan, Basilan last June 2, 2001, a battle that was well covered by the media. After being surrounded for almost 17 hours by soldiers in a hospital compound, the Abu Sayyaf seemed to casually escape with their hostages through a back gate in broad daylight.

Considering the consequences of that failure, it could very well be the biggest military blunder in Philippine history.

Soon after, both houses of Congress decided to investigate. Now six months later, despite the testimony of over a dozen witnesses who risked their lives to come forward, neither the Senate nor the House of Representatives has released a report on its findings.

The truth about that incident could confirm what everyone already suspects: the military's biggest enemy is not in the jungle but within itself.

Only two theories have been considered during the investigations to explain how the Abu Sayyaf escaped: incompetence or treason on the part of military officers. Fr. Cirilo Nacorda, a former hostage who was in the hospital compound during the siege, has testified that there was collusion between the Abu Sayyaf and senior military officers, a claim dismissed by the AFP spokesperson as the rantings of a traumatized man.

The generals have so far been willing to admit only "lapses" in the conduct of that mission. But if this were the end of the story, it would be incompetence on a monumental scale.

So far, the military has not fully answered the following questions:

1. Why was an outgunned group of less than 70 scout rangers without combat experience allowed to do the bulk of the fighting for 17 hours, without reinforcements, despite the easy access to the battle site?
2. Why were troops guarding the back gate and escape route ordered to withdraw to attend a supposed "briefing"? Who gave that order?
3. Why did three Army soldiers based in Basilan and accompanying armed residents not fire their weapons during a brief engagement after the escape, forcing the civilians to do all the fighting?
4. Why were senior military officers nowhere to be seen during the firefight, even after they knew the Abu Sayyaf's top commanders and all its hostages were surrounded?
5. Why was an Army scout ranger unfamiliar with Basilan—Capt. Ruben Guinolbay—allowed to lead this mission without radios or maps of the town? Was 17 hours not enough time to deliver to him basic communications equipment for coordinating the maneuvers of his men?

Incompetence and poor decision-making may help answer at least some of these questions, which are enough reasons for generals to lose their jobs. None have; in fact the task force commander for Basilan during that botched siege, now Major Gen. Romeo Dominguez, was recently promoted, a signal to other officers that failure of mission, or keeping quiet about the real cause of that failure, is rewarded in the Philippine military.

If ineptness on a grand scale were the only explanation, Abu Sabaya and his men are very lucky after having attempted something that appeared to be foolish: They voluntarily holed themselves up with all of their prized hostages in a walled compound located in a predominantly Christian town near an Army base.

It was either meant to be a suicide mission, or they knew something that no one else knew, except those who helped them escape.

Howie G. Severino is a TV reporter who covered the siege of Lamitan.

THEY SAID

Bad image

"You say, 'Abu Sayyaf, Philippines' they think it's the Wild, Wild West."

—Unicapital Securities Inc. research chief Leo Venezuela saying that the problem concerning the Abu Sayyaf has given the entire country an image of lawlessness and chaos

Peace is all

"All we want is peace here in Basilan. If the Americans could give it, then why reject the offer?"

—Basilan Bishop Martin Jumoad

Not representative Chinoy

"We take anybody's opinion, but there are other opinions. Ang-See is not the only representative of the Chinese community."

—Presidential spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao on Teresita Ang-See's objection to the extension of Director General Leandro Mendoza's term as PNP chief

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Pressing the right button at the right time

I HAVE read that the Social Security System intends to raise the premiums contributed by its members to avert the exhaustion of the fund in just over a decade from now.

The problem with the SSS is that whenever it is in need of funds to pay off its pensioners, it immediately calls for an increase in premiums from its 24 million members, who have to shell out a portion of their meager salaries hoping that when they retire they will have something to live on for the remaining years of their lives.

It's very obvious that the SSS top brass is pressing the wrong button. The SSS cannot, by any means, renege on its primary role of providing benefits to its members, especially the pensioners. Remember that these pensioners and those who will retire until the pension funds projected exhaustion are themselves contributors to the fund. They are just collecting their due after providing the pension fund with capital for many years. It's not their fault that their life expectancy improved.

The problem probably lies with how the SSS was or is being run. Looking from this angle, we can think of several options, and definitely increasing the premiums from the members is the lowest in the order of priorities.

Before the SSS digs deeper into the pockets of its 24 million members, it should first look at its own executives who are much too well compensated, or to its investments in companies like San Miguel Corp., or go after the crooks within its ranks, or maybe cut excess fat from its operational budget. It should not be exempted from the call for austerity sounded by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to reduce our budget deficit.

After all the above shall have been done, only then should the SSS go to its members and ask for bigger contributions.

It's a matter of pressing the right button at the right moment.

—MARIO IAN N. MOSQUISA, Real Street, Sonco, Borongan, Eastern Samar

Code-NGO enjoyed an unfair advantage

IT is a rare opportunity indeed for our group to get special mention in the INQUIRER's editorial. (PDI, 2/11/02) And when such mention is laced with insult, we can't help but sit up and take notice.

"Mentally dishonest" whose work is a product of "lazy research"? Sounds like a paid hack, whose standards of journalism are way below what we would expect of the INQUIRER. Definitely sensational, probably fearless, but balanced?

We know our research, far from lazy, is hitting its mark—your editorial is testament of that. We may have mental lapses, but we are not dishonest. We pride ourselves on that and no one, not even a newspaper with one of the biggest circulation in the country, can take that away from us.

Thanks for the information that the RCBC submitted seven bids and not four. That's not what Dan Songco of Code-NGO, his financial adviser Red Mayo, and Jimmy Panganiban of the RCBC told us at the Dec. 12, 2001 forum on the PEACe bonds. That makes their chances of winning 4 of 7 bids a bit higher, 0.0002, instead of 0.000007. (By the way, you misquoted us on the latter.) If an auction isn't about a level playing field and equal chances, then what is it about? We hope it is not about influence and undue advantage.

If all dealers had only one week to price the bonds and prepare for their bids, if all dealers were informed by the Treasury of all the details regarding the bid just one day before the auction, then there is nothing to condemn. But the RCBC and Code-NGO had seven months ahead of their rivals. Would fully informing their rival bidders one day before the auction effectively level the information field? Of course not.

—MA. TERESA DIOKNO-PASCUAL, president, Freedom from Debt Coalition

LAST time we looked, our masthead was saying we would try to give balanced **news**. *"Balanced views" looks like a nice prescription for fence-sitting. Incidentally, since the FDC takes pride in doing honest research, will it please tell us who among our editorial writers is a "paid hack" and who is paying him?*—**Ed.**

Bad precedent at PNP

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo set a bad precedent in the Philippine National Police when she extended the term of Director General Leandro Mendoza for nine months. Her decision, which is a clear case of political patronage, has done the police force more harm than good.

If the President wants the PNP to retain its independence and unity, she should recall her order and choose Mendoza's replacement based on the police force's principle of succession.

Should the President insist on having Mendoza as her PNP chief, she should expect problems within the PNP, some of which she may not be able to handle.

—ARTURO NOMBRE, lieutenant colonel (ret.), Better Living Subdivision, Parañaque City

Corruption is key concern everywhere

I DISAGREE with Manuel F. Almario's opinion (PDI, 2/1/02) that corruption is not a key factor in slowing down Philippine economic growth.

About three years ago, while on another visit, I read in the INQUIRER of a contract awarded to Motorola for police radios. The police chief or another high public official purportedly cancelled the award in favor of a firm he had relations with. I returned home before the final status of this contract was determined. But what I want to say is, if this is the way business is being conducted in the Philippines, would-be investors who don't have connections in high places would be discouraged from coming over.

I admit my reference to the police radio contract is based on second-hand knowledge at best. But I do know the attitude of Filipinos toward corruption. "This is a way of life here, what can we do?" they simply say. They seem to be convinced that corruption is here to stay.

This is a difficult environment for change and improvement. It is not one where a Filipino Bill Gates will become successful, generating thousands of jobs with some entrepreneurial ventures.

To illustrate his point, Almario mentioned the United States whose economy has grown, despite being mired in corruption. I will not deny there is corruption in the United States. But corruption there elicits wide public outrage and when found out, it is denounced and punished. The result is, corruption is controlled.

The case of Enron which Almario cited as an example of corruption in the United States should be seen instead as an example of the United States fighting corruption. The executives of Enron know what is coming to them, and so their vice chair committed suicide. When you are exposed as corrupt in the United States, becoming rich at the expense of the public welfare, there is a terrible price to pay.

It is too early to know how the Enron affair, now being investigated by Congress, will end. But small investors in the United States now expect accounting practices to improve and corporate directors to be more careful with their fiduciary duty to oversee business firms in behalf of stockholders.

Mine is not an opinion of an economist. I am simply an American who has visited the Philippines several times after marrying a Filipina I met in the United States. I like Filipinos and really hope their condition will improve. I wish President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo success in working for the welfare of the whole nation.—**HERBERT PECK, 882 Shevlin Drive, El Cerrito CA**

That row over Kabacan mayorship

WE do not have the P142,718.40 Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol paid for his full-page advertisement in the INQUIRER last Jan. 25, 2002, but in the spirit of fairness and fair play, we hope you will give due prominence to this letter-clarification. We are only poor letter-writers.

Rounding up 17 town and city mayors whose purported signatures appear under a manifesto of support to Mayor Wilfredo Bataga, Piñol warns against the Commission on Elections subverting the people's will in Kabacan, Cotabato.

Piñol is the one out to subvert the democratic electoral process and undermine the democratic institutions like the Supreme Court, the Comelec and the executive as represented by the Department of Interior and Local Government.

In defiance of a Supreme Court order dated Jan. 15, 2002, that led to the proclamation and assumption to office of Kabacan Mayor-elect Luzviminda Tan, Piñol mounted a protest rally in Kabacan which he proudly led, with his photo prominently displayed in the full-page advertisement he took out in the INQUIRER.

In utter disregard of proper and legal procedures in electoral cases, Piñol ventilated his appeal on the Comelec order via a full-page advertisement that made sweeping and libelous accusations against the Comelec. This was a good indication that his case was indeed bankrupt of any legal arguments as confirmed by his own admission "of the inferior legal arguments presented by Bataga and his group."

Worse, he got the 17 mayors to openly accuse some Comelec officials of manipulating the election result "in exchange for several million pesos," making them potentially liable for such libelous statements.

In defiance of Interior Secretary Jose Lina, Piñol has refused to recognize the authority of Mayor Tan, despite a written clarification from Lina dated Jan. 25, 2002.

Quoted in The Mindanao Cross, Feb. 2, 2002, Piñol said: "Whether I recognize Bataga or not, it's none of their business. As far as the DILG is concerned, they are recognizing Luz Tan. As far as I am concerned, I recognize Tan has no moral ascendancy to claim the mayorship of Kabacan."

The entire local government apparatus, including the police in Kabacan already recognize Mayor Tan, based on the order of Interior Secretary Lina.

Piñol, it would seem, is the last holdout.

—CEDRIC S. MANTAWIL, chair, Movement for Peace & Tranquility for a Better Kabacan

Code-NGO's role in creation of 2 environmental NGOs

CODE-NGO is grateful for your article entitled "Code-NGO set up $50- M fund from debt swap" (PDI, 2/9/02) which highlighted our experience in creative fund-raising long before our PEACe bonds project. However, please allow me to correct certain information in the article regarding Code-NGO's role in the formation of the Foundation for the Philippine Environment (FPE) and the Foundation for a Sustainable Society Inc. (FSSI), two endowment funds that were established from debt-swap arrangements.

While indeed Code-NGO was involved in the creation of these two endowments, a number of other NGO networks were also responsible for their creation. Some Code-NGO members along with other NGOs participated in a debt-for-environment campaign in the United States led by the Green Forum. When the debt-swap arrangement was completed, it was the nationwide network of Code-NGO and Green Forum that were used to conduct consultations on how the FPE would be created.

In the case of FSSI, Code-NGO was the primary partner of the Swiss NGOs that initiated the debt-for-development swap arrangement with their government. Eventually, it was Code-NGO that shepherded the formation of the foundation along with a number of NGO networks.

Our members' collective experience in setting up and managing these as well as a number of other NGO grant-making organizations became the starting point for the creation of the endowment for the Peace and Equity Foundation, the managing organization for the proceeds of the PEACe bonds.

—DANILO A. SONGCO, national coordinator, Code-NGO, Social Development Complex, ADMU Campus, Loyola Heights, Quezon City

Matter for the courts to decide

WE write in connection with the letter sent by GMA Network Inc., through Carmencita G. Arce, to the INQUIRER, which was published last Jan. 31, 2002.

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. regrets that GMA sought to argue in a public forum the merits of a pending court case. Inasmuch as such discussion may be a violation of the rule on *sub judice* and may constitute contempt of court, ABS-CBN shall refrain from making any comment and shall leave the matter for the courts to decide.—**LAWRENCE T. TAN, AVP for corporate affairs, ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.**

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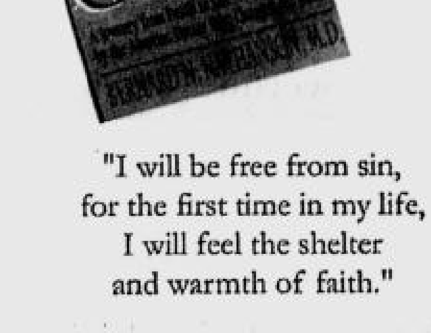
" I was one of the founders of NARAL, the National Abortion Rights Action League in 1969 and for a period of two years, I was Director of the largest abortion clinic in the Western World."

Dr. Bernard N. Nathanson

"Since those times, we have a science which is known as Fetology which has allowed us to study the human fetus. And all those studies have concluded without exception that the unborn child is a human being indistinguishable from any of us and an integral part of our human community."

"I felt the burden of sin growing heavier and more insistent. I have such heavy moral baggage.... I am afraid."

Let's all for humanity's sake, here and now, stop the killing.



"I will be free from sin,
for the first time in my life,
I will feel the shelter
and warmth of faith."

BE INVOLVED!
RESPECT AND CARE FOR LIFE.

Dr. Bernard N. Nathanson
Program of Activities

Saturday/ February 16-9:00am
Address to the Pro-life 2002 National Convention
St. Paul's College Auditorium
Pedro Gil St. Manila

12:00nn
Lunch Conference for Media
Manila Hotel

Sunday/ February 17- 9:00am
Conference for Healthcare Professionals & Students
"Human Life Issues in Engineering Reproductive Technologies"
St. Paul's College Auditorium
Manila

12nn
Lunch Conference for Selected Print Media Editors & Columnists of Dailies and Women's Magazines

4pm
Memorial Service & Wreath Laying at the Tomb of Aborted Babies
Manila South Cemetery

Monday/ February 18-9:00am
CHAP Conference Forum with St. Paul's college Auditorium
Manila

6:00pm
Benefit Dinner for ECFL- CBCP
Guest Speaker Dr. Bernard N. Nathanson

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In cooperation with Pro-life Philippines, Human Life International Asia and Defensores Fidei Foundation

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INVITATION TO BID

The DOH-Center for Health Development, Tuguegarao City, hereby invites interested suppliers to provide drugs and medicines, medical, surgical, laboratory and dental supplies and office, janitorial, computer supplies and equipment to this Office.

Interested suppliers who can provide the above-mentioned item may obtain documents from the Secretariat upon presentation of the original and photocopy of DOH Certificate of Suppliers Accreditation, License to Operate and Certificate of Product Registration and upon payment of a non-refundable bidding fee of P700.00.

Pre-qualification and issuance of bid/ tender documents: February 25 - March 1, 2002
Pre-bid conference: March 12, 2002
9:00 AM (drugs, medicines, medical, surgical, laboratory and dental supplies)
2:00 PM (office, janitorial, computer supplies, equipments)
Opening of bids: March 19, 2002 (9:00 AM)
(drugs and medicines, medical, surgical, laboratory and dental supplies)
March 20, 2002 (9:00 AM)
(office, janitorial, computer supplies, equipments)
Venue: DOH - Center for Health Development
Main Conference Hall
Carig, Tuguegarao City

The DOH - Center for Health Development, Tuguegarao City reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality in the bids received or to accept bids as maybe advantageous and responsive to the needs of this Office. For more details, call 844-1748 - Secretariat.

(Sgd.) ERIBERTO M. POLICAR, MD, MPH, CESO III
Director IV

(PDI – Feb. 15, 16 & 17, 2002)

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Milosevic opens defense with TV film

THE HAGUE—Slobodan Milosevic launched his war crimes trial defense on Thursday by showing a documentary which said Nato had violated international law by bombing Yugoslavia in 1999 in response to a Serb crackdown in Kosovo.

Milosevic, charged with genocide in the 1992-95 Bosnian war and crimes against humanity in Croatia in 1991-92 and Kosovo in 1999 by the Hague war crimes court, has repeatedly branded the court an "illegal" instrument of his Nato enemies.

"I hope and assume according to the rules you explained to me I won't be interrupted. I would like to show a video first and then start speaking after that," the former Yugoslav leader said at the start of the third day of his trial.

The German television documentary featured interviews with people who said the killings of Kosovo Albanians at Racak early in 1999—referred to by prosecutors in their opening remarks—had been used as a pretext for Nato bombing.

The program, called "Monitor," was broadcast by German regional station WDR.

"Nato strikes were against international law. There was no mandate of this nature," Heinz Loquai, an official of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said in an interview with the German broadcaster.

The United States, Britain, Germany and France were involved in what was the first offensive action against a sovereign nation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's history when they launched air strikes against Milosevic in Belgrade.

"What really happened in Kosovo was used to deceive German public opinion," the presenter of the documentary said. Milosevic has argued that the West used Serb operations in Kosovo as a pretext to gain greater influence in the Balkans.

Milosevic has appointed no formal counsel, to make clear his refusal to recognize the UN-mandated court. After he declined to enter a plea, judges have made one of "not guilty" for him.

But Yugoslav legal advisers in close daily contact with him said he would launch his defense on Thursday by showing nearly an hour of video footage to the court—employing the same glossy techniques as his accusers. *Reuters*

MILOSEVIC

US raid killed women, kids, Afghan gov says

TARIN KOT, Afghanistan—US warplanes bombarded a tractor carrying fleeing Afghan women and children in October, an Afghan governor said Wednesday, supporting survivor accounts of a repeat attack that families say killed 21 innocents—some, mere babies.

Surrounded by survivors scarred and lamed, fathers and husbands of those killed rejected a claim by Gov. Jan Mohammed Khan that Taliban fighters had been hiding among the mothers and aunts fleeing with their young.

"You think Taliban would come among our women, or we would let them? There were no Taliban here," said villager Fasal Rabi, cradling an 18-month-old son whose leg bore scars and swollen lumps of what the family said was US shrapnel.

"We are not Taliban and we are not al-Qaida. We are innocent, and these were women and children," Rabi said.

The attack, at the height of the US bombing campaign, was reported only sketchily at the time. Survivor accounts, and those of Uruzgan's provincial governor, are the latest indication that some US attacks in the four-month campaign have gone badly wrong.

Jan Mohammed said Wednesday he privately delivered US apologies and $1,000 to $2,000 in cash to families of 19 men killed in another attack—a Jan. 23 commando raid on an Uruzgan school. The governor said the men had been anti-Taliban figures sent by him to retrieve surrendered Taliban weapons.

The US military denied hitting the village of Thorai where the deaths occurred. A military spokesperson said warplanes had targeted only a Taliban compound in the nearby city of Tarin Kot, capital of central Uruzgan province.

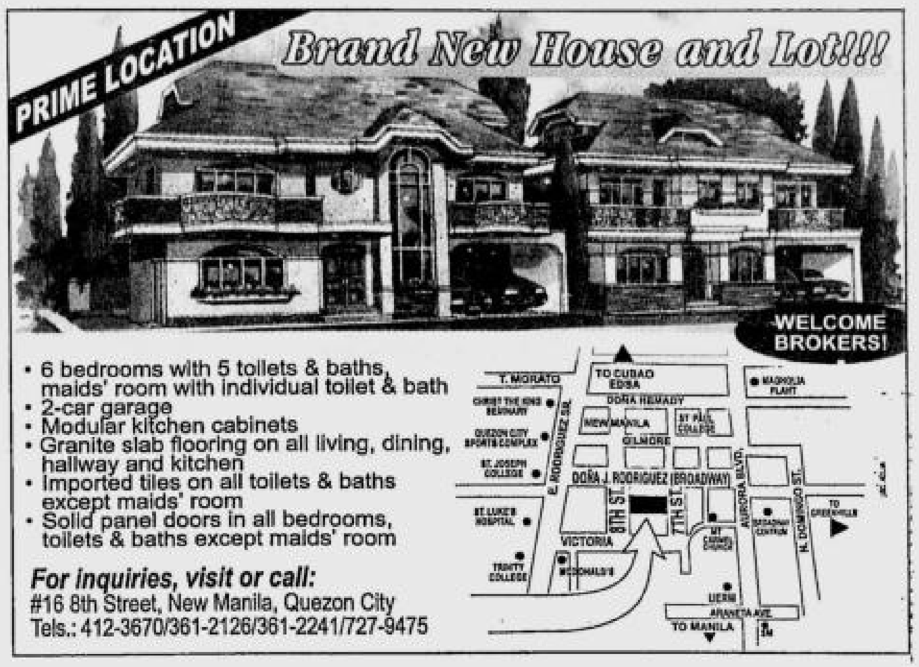
"We had precision-guided missiles that we used on a Taliban leadership compound, command and control compound in Tarin Kot," spokesperson Maj. Ralph Mills said Wednesday at US Central Command in Tampa, Florida. "We watched the imagery and we know that it hit the target that we were hoping to hit. All weapons were accounted for."

Villagers, however, showed metal shards, allegedly from US bombs, with "No lift" written on them in English. A farmer in a field a few dozen meters away showed the yellow-green canister of an unexploded bomb he said fell that Oct. 21 night.

During the attack, US bombs hit a Taliban military headquarters and a police station in Tarin Kot, local Afghans said. The city and Thorai were still under Taliban control.

Watching the bombs come nearer, two families in Thorai loaded women and children into a metal trailer. The men hitched it to a tractor, and put Rabi's 22-year-old brother at the wheel, telling him to flee.

US bombs hit before the tractor had puttered 10 minutes down the road, Rabi said. *AP*



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DISTANCE FLYER NO MORE? A migrating Monarch butterfly sits on the branch of a tree at the Rosario natural reserve in Michoacan state west of Mexico City in this Nov. 29, 2001 file photo. Future migrations of the Mexican butterfly may not come in huge waves after the cold killed about 250 million Monarch butterflies in central Mexico last month.

REUTERS

EU tries hand in Mideast

JERUSALEM—German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer follows British Foreign Minister Jack Straw to Jerusalem on Thursday as Europe tries its hand at ending the vicious cycle of Israel-Palestinian violence.

The back-to-back visits by the two foreign ministers have kept alive perceptions of a divergence between the United States and Europe over how to handle the Middle East Crisis following a high-level EU meeting at the weekend in which it called for less stress on security and more on a political solution.

Fishcher, like Straw 24 hours earlier, heads to a conflict where tensions are as high as they have been since a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation erupted in September 2000.

At least 843 Palestinians and 256 Israelis have been killed since the uprising began.

At nightfall on Wednesday, Israeli tanks rumbled out of Palestinian-held areas of the Gaza Strip taken 12 hours earlier in what the Israeli Army said were "anti-terror" operations in response to Sunday's unprecedented launch of two Palestinian Qassam-2 rockets at Israel.

Five Palestinian police died during the tank incursions into northern Gaza and Deir al-Balah in central Gaza.

Israeli military officials said the incursions were part of a new mode of operation since the Qassam-2 rockets were fired at Israel by Hamas militants.

The rockets are capable of hitting Israeli cities if fired from the West Bank where Israel believes they have already been deployed.

The fighting overshadowed the visit by Straw who met Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in Jerusalem on Wednesday before travelling to the West Bank for talks with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Straw avoided criticizing Israel's raids, telling reporters after meeting Peres: "I regret the death of anybody in this region."

His views, in which he called for Arafat to clamp down on terrorism as a first step toward opening the way to renewed negotiations, appeared closer to the United States' position than that of some other European Union members.

"The first steps that have to be taken are to make the life of the people of Israel much more secure and that means clamping down on terrorism which comes from the occupied territories," Straw said during a news conference with Peres.

He said Arafat had made some efforts toward reining in extremists but urged the Palestinian leader to take further action. *Reuters*

Steelier stainless secret found

LONDON—It may look sleek and strong gleaming atop New York's Chrysler Building or on kitchen surfaces and in surgical instruments but stainless steel has an Achilles heel, scientists said on Wednesday.

Unlike ordinary steel it does not rust, hence its name, but it is susceptible to microscopic pits of corrosion that can weaken it and cause anything from a leaky dishwasher to an industrial accident.

But British scientists think they have solved the problem and devised a method to produce cheaper stainless steel that is still safe.

"We figured out how it happens, which suggests mechanisms that may work to fix it," said Dr. Mary Ryan, an expert in material science at London's Imperial College.

Ryan and scientists at University College London got to the heart of the problem by microscopically examining the tiny pits of corrosion that weaken stainless steel and can lead to cracking. Their research is published in the latest edition of the science journal Nature.

They discovered that the pitting of the material, which is made stainless by alloying iron with chromium, was due to sulphur-rich impurity particles in the ore. These suck chromium out of the stainless steel, creating the microscopic pits that aren't stainless.

"People have known they are bad but not why they are bad. What we have done is shown why they are bad," Ryan explained.

"The impurities remain a liquid at much lower temperatures while the rest of the steel solidifies. That is the problem. While they are a liquid chromium dissolves into these particles."

Ryan and her colleagues said the problem could be solved by altering the conditions under which steel is made. They suggested that heat treatments after the steel is processed could diffuse the chromium to fill in the depleted sites.

"We're saying you might be able to use normal steel but change the way you process it," Ryan added. *Reuters*

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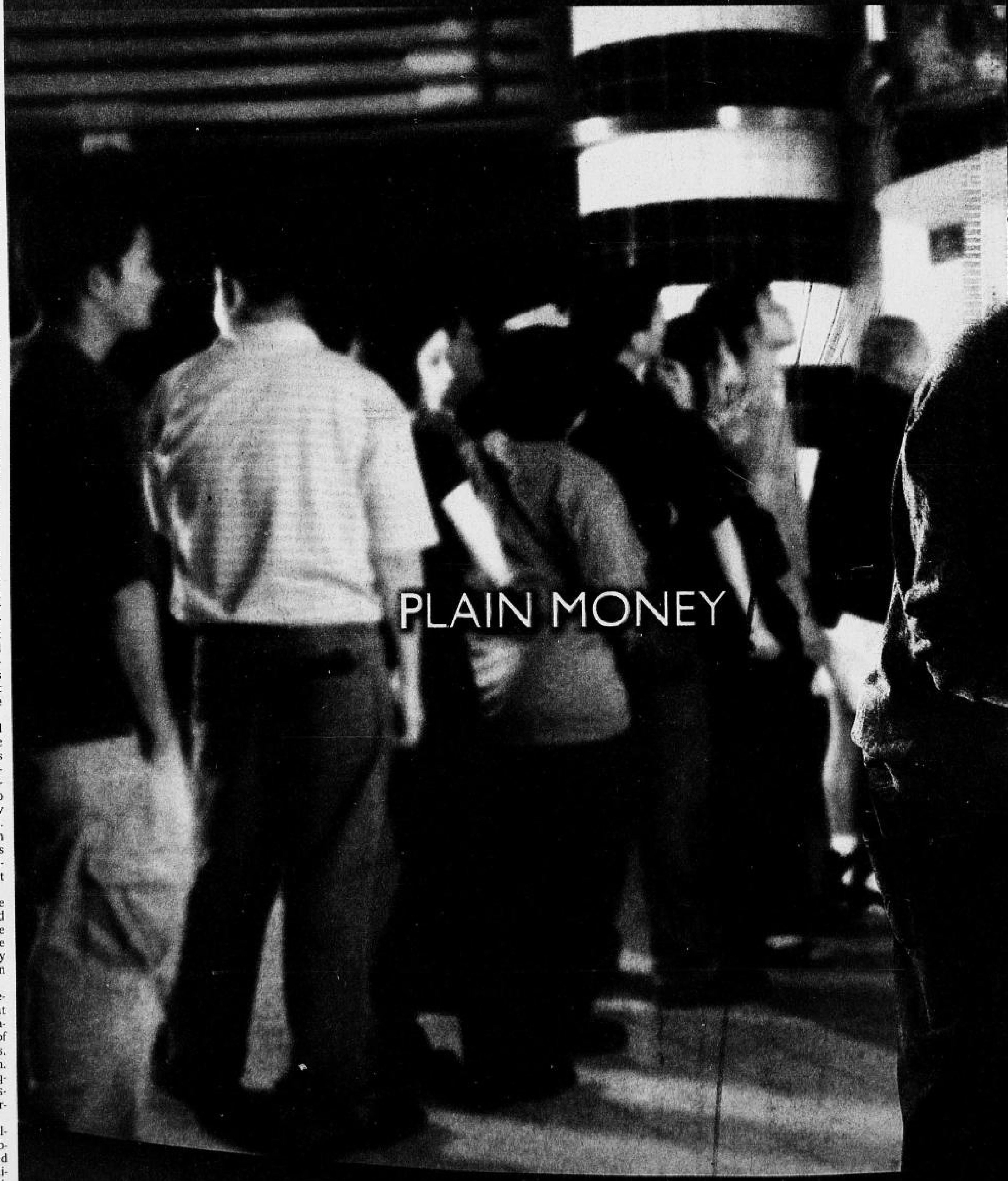

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DESPITE AGREEMENT

Peace remains fragile in Maluku

JAKARTA—Despite an agreement between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia's Maluku province to end their intercommunal conflict, much remains to be done before lasting peace is achieved, an international think-tank said Thursday.

The Brussels-based International Crisis Group said it was essential that security forces remain impartial if the government wished to end the conflict in which about 9,000 people have died since 1999.

Explosions

Highlighting the still volatile situation in the province, four small bombs exploded in its capital, Ambon, late Wednesday, media reports said. There were no casualties from the blasts, which were set off in abandoned buildings in the city.

The explosions raised fears that Tuesday's peace agreement may not be enough to end the fighting.

Government ministers said they hoped to emulate the success of similar talks in December that ended a similar—although smaller—sectarian conflict in Poso, in Central Sulawesi.

Welfare Minister Jusuf Kalla, who mediated the peace agreement, said the bombs were likely the work of a small group of extremists.

"Trust me, people who want to rip apart the peace deal will not be well received by the community," he said.

Hardline members of both factions in the province, a small archipelago 2,600 km northeast of Jakarta, are doubtful the deal will hold.

Leaders of the Laskar Jihad militia from Indonesia's dominant island of Java have already said they will refuse to leave the region, which was known as the Spice Islands in colonial times.

Distrust

Although violence has petered out during the last six months, there is still widespread distrust between the two communities. Ambon, once a charming colonial port town, has been devastated by the fighting and is now known as the "Beirut of the East" because it is divided in two by a strip of no man's land.

Police and military units have been criticized for taking part in attacks on Christian villages.

In its report, the International Crisis Group recommended that fresh troops be brought in from outside the province.

"The reality is that local forces, both the military and especially the police, are highly vulnerable to . . . partisan alignment," it said.

It also cited allegations that badly paid troops tolerate violence in order to force property owners to pay protection money.

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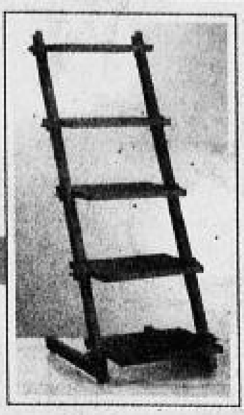

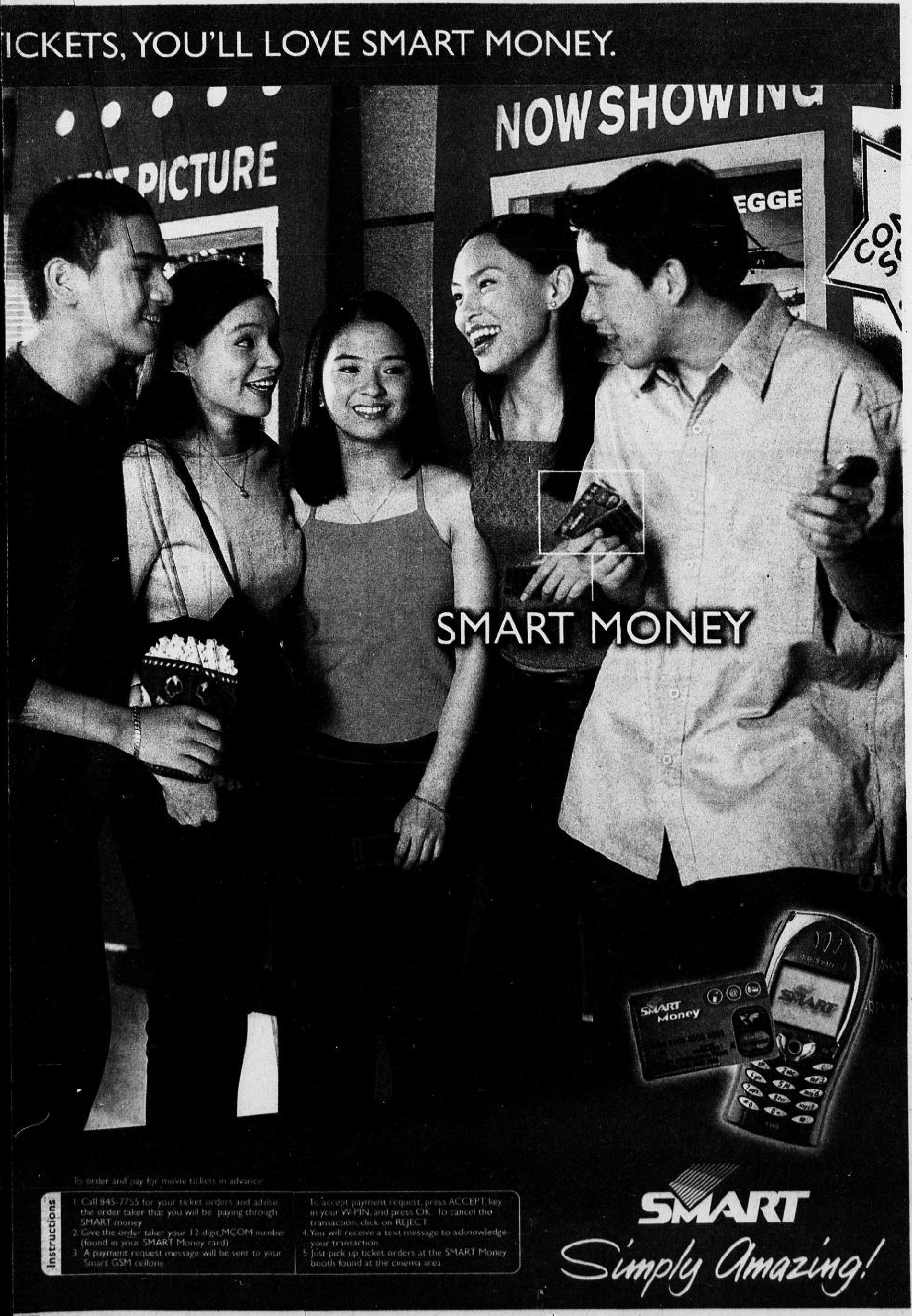

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4. You will receive a text message to acknowledge your transaction.
5. Just pick up ticket orders at the SMART Money booth found at the cinema area.

Suspect, cops stage fruitless Pearl hunt

SHEIKH OMAR

KARACHI—Pakistani police said on Thursday they had raided two houses in the city of Karachi on information gleaned from the chief suspect in the kidnapping of American Daniel Pearl, but there was no sign of the missing reporter.

Police said British-born Islamic militant Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh had confessed to masterminding the kidnapping of Pearl in Karachi on Jan. 23, but had told them he no longer knew where the Wall Street Journal reporter was being held.

"He named two or three places, but they were all locked up, so that didn't solve our problem," said a senior investigator. "We raided two places in central district overnight but they were empty houses," a police source confirmed.

When he disappeared, Pearl was trying to contact the leader of a little-known radical Islamic group and was working on a story about possible links between alleged shoe bomber Briton Richard Reid and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

Investigators said Sheikh Omar, as the chief suspect is commonly known, gave himself up to police on Tuesday, after they released several of his family members from detention. But hopes his arrest would swiftly lead to Pearl have been dashed.

"He is a very tough guy, physically and mentally—it will take some time to persuade him to talk," the police source said. "He admitted he had masterminded the kidnapping but said the people who had executed it were no longer in contact with him."

Investigators said Sheikh Omar said he had last spoken to the people holding Pearl at the beginning of last week as police started to close in on the gang.

He claims to have told them to release the 38-year-old reporter, whose wife Mariane is expecting their first child. *Reuters*

Did Enron inflate prices during Calif crisis? Probe on

WASHINGTON—Federal energy regulators launched a probe on Wednesday into whether Enron Corp. and its subsidiaries inflated power prices during California's energy crisis last year, but said the energy trader's collapse was no reason to slow national electricity deregulation.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Chair Pat Wood, named by President George W. Bush at the urging of former Enron Chair Kenneth Lay, ordered the investigation amid pressure from West Coast Democrats.

Enron, which collapsed in December in the nation's biggest-ever corporate bankruptcy, has denied any wrongdoing.

In what Wood called a "fact-finding" measure, FERC said it would probe whether Enron or others "manipulated short-term prices for electric energy or natural gas . . . or otherwise exercised undue influence over wholesale electric prices" that lead to "unjust and unreasonable" rates in America's most populous state.

FERC's general counsel would have subpoena power to compel testimony from Enron executives and employees, if necessary, Wood told reporters after a FERC meeting, adding the commission would prepare a report on its findings for Congress this summer.

Other federal investigators have launched numerous probes into Enron's complex off-balance-sheet transactions, its relationship with accounting firm Andersen and potential securities fraud.

Wood, a Texas Republican, told a congressional panel on Wednesday that Enron's failure should not kill legislation to deregulate the $220-billion US electricity market.

"Did energy markets and the growing trend toward competition cause or contribute to Enron's collapse? No," Wood told a hearing on Enron's impact on energy markets.

The head of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission also argued against more regulation, telling the panel Enron's bankruptcy had little impact on US energy futures markets and saying Congress should not rush to impose new trading rules.

Houston-based Enron, once America's seventh-biggest company, collapsed last year amid allegations it misled investors about its finances while top executives sold shares for huge profits and thousands of employees lost their jobs and retirement savings.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives Financial Services Committee canceled a hearing set for Thursday at which former Enron Chair Kenneth Lay had been subpoenaed to appear. Lay was expected to refuse to answer questions, exercising his right not to incriminate himself. *Reuters*

White House no rose lover

WASHINGTON—Roses are red, violets are blue, if you take a bouquet to the White House, the Secret Service will stop you.

That was the lesson for a US senator on Tuesday who carried a dozen long-stemmed roses into the White House for First Lady Laura Bush.

Sen. Bob Graham, a Florida Democrat, got past the White House gate but the Secret Service prevented the offending bouquet from entering the East Room.

Graham brought the flowers imported from Colombia to the White House as an early Valentine's Day gesture for Mrs. Bush, and to make a political point.

He has urged President Bush that duties on goods from the Andean region should be deferred for 90 days to give Congress time to renew the expired Andean Trade Preferences Act.

Colombia, which exports $600 million of fresh flowers to the United States a year, has faced tariffs since the trade benefits expired on Dec. 4, 2001.

Graham, aware of tight security, had asked the florist to bundle the $70 bouquet in clear wrap rather than in a box so the contents were obvious, his spokesperson said.

The senator, who is chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, was stopped before entering the East Room where he had been invited along with other members of Congress to attend the president's anti-drug strategy announcement.

The roses were sent to the White House legislative affairs office that wanted to know which florist was used, when the flowers were purchased and who picked them up, Paul Anderson, spokesperson for the senator, said. *Reuters*

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War games start faces more protests

GLORIA
TRAYDOR

IN DAVAO CITY, protests led to name-calling.

BING GONZALES

Bayan to hold caravan around air base used by US as holding bay for war jets

CEBU CITY—The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) will hold a protest caravan today to express their opposition to the presence in Mindanao and this city of American troops participating in the RP-US Balikatan Exercises.

Paul Rodriguez, Bayan chair of Central Visayas, said the caravan will start at 9 a.m. and proceed to the Mactan Benito Ebuen Airbase in Lapulapu City, Mactan Island, Cebu.

Rodriguez said they wanted to express their relentless opposition against the Balikatan exercises that will formally start today in Zamboanga.

Capt. Enrico Canaya, the airbase's Tactical Operation Command spokesperson, said they would allow the militant groups to stage demonstrations at the MBEAB despite the tight security measures imposed after a homemade bomb was recovered near its gate last Sunday.

He said Air Force officials do not consider the militant groups as a threat to the security of the airbase.

He added that the ongoing investigation of the bomb scare had not also pointed to the militant groups as those responsible for putting a Molotov bomb near the airbase's Gate 2 last Sunday.

Rodriguez denied that their group had placed the bomb near the gate, saying some "pro-American groups" wanted to frame Bayan and other groups opposed to the presence of American soldiers to stop them from holding demonstrations.

Canaya said there would be no significant activity at the Mactan Airbase today with the start of the joint military exercises.

The 220 American soldiers now based at the MBEAB were just waiting for instructions from Zamboanga, he added.

The American soldiers arrived at the MBEAB over the weekend to serve as maintenance crew to US aircraft participating in the Balikatan exercises.

Six American aircraft—three C-130 cargo plane and 3 MH-47 helicopters—have also been placed on standby at the airbase.

Canaya said the American soldiers are required to follow the guidelines imposed at the airbase. They are also limited to designated areas in the MBEAB, he added.

The American soldiers are billeted at undisclosed hotels in Lapulapu City. ***Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau***

Women mark Valentine's with rally in Clark

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Wearing red shirts and holding red balloons, some 50 women in Pampanga on Thursday spent their Valentine's Day in a mid-morning picket condemning the presence of American troopers in Clark.

"We love Yankees out," the women shouted as they burned the United States flag at Clark's main gate.

More than 20 guards of the Clark Special Economic Zone rushed to secure the main gate with barbed wire fences.

The picket, organized by the Pagkakaisa ng Kababaihan para sa Inang Bayan (Kaisa-Ka), also called for the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement.

American soldiers have been holding joint trainings in Clark and other Luzon camps with Filipino soldiers since 1999 under the VFA.

Fanny Salas, a leader of Kaisa-Ka, said the VFA exercises, including the Balikatan 02-1 exercises in Mindanao, were "no less preparations for war."

In war, women are "victims of deliberate gender forms of violence and persecution such as rape and sexual slavery, which are weapons of war initiated by imperialist aggressors," she said.

Salas said Kaisa-Ka's Wag War! (Women Against Globalization! Women Against War) campaign that started last month has gathered more than 20,000 signatures from women who expressed concern for the safety of Mindanao women and children.

Kaisa-Ka, in a statement, also condemned President Macapagal-Arroyo for calling oppositors of VFA exercises as anti-Filipinos.

"We love to hate Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. She's the real anti-Filipino because of her rabid pro-globalization and pro-US war policy," Salas said.

Protests also greeted the arrival of US troops in Mindanao for another set of military exercises aimed at helping Philippine soldiers bring down the Abu Sayyaf.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had denied that the exercises were meant to facilitate the release of an American couple seized by the bandit group.

She said the exercises would follow a new set of curriculum that was designed to fight terrorism.

The Abu Sayyaf had been linked to the international terrorist network of Osama bin Laden, the suspected mastermind in the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon Building in the United States.

Ms Macapagal came under fire from leftist groups and legislators from the opposition for her decision to let the American soldiers into the country for the war games. ***Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

60
HOME!
I mindanao
U.S. TROOPS
OUT NOW!

A MEMBER of the Aklas Mindanao coalition wears a black mask painted with anti-US slogan on a silent protest at the Gaisano Mall in Davao City.

RYAN LIM/ PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

'QUIET' CELEBRATION

Firecracker ban spoils Chinese New Year

DAVAO CITY—The Filipino-Chinese community here celebrated the Chinese New Year with the traditional 'Kung Hei Fat Choy," but minus the noise of firecrackers.

Yesterday's celebration was in sharp contrast with that of last year's, when Chinoys spent thousands of pesos on pyrotechnics.

The economy has nothing to do with the absence of the loud explosions. What spoiled the fun was Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's standing order banning firecrackers.

"The use of firecrackers during the Chinese New Year is not for fun. It serves a purpose (which is) to ward off evil spirits," John Gaisano, a Filipino-Chinese businessman said.

Even then, Gaisano said members of the Chinese community did not think twice about obeying Duterte's order against pyrotechnics.

Last year, during the celebration of Christmas and the Christian New Year, Davao City recorded a near-zero injury because of Duterte's firecracker ban.

"We agreed with the policy of the city government because it is for the good of everyone," Gaisano, former president of the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry said.

Acting Mayor Luis Bonguyan said Duterte, who is on leave, asked him to implement the firecracker ban.

But he said that even without the mayor's order, the Chinese community could still not explode firecrackers because of a 1948 city ordinance, which stipulates that fireworks are only allowed on Independence Day, Christmas and New Year's Eve.

"The ordinance has not identified Feb. 12 or a Chinese New Year's day as exceptions to the firecracker and fireworks display ban," Bonguyan said.

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"There is a sorting machine in the central office now, which sorts the letters according to their ZIP (Zone Improvement Plan) codes but that's the only machine we have," he said. ***Joel Escovilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

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Across the NATION

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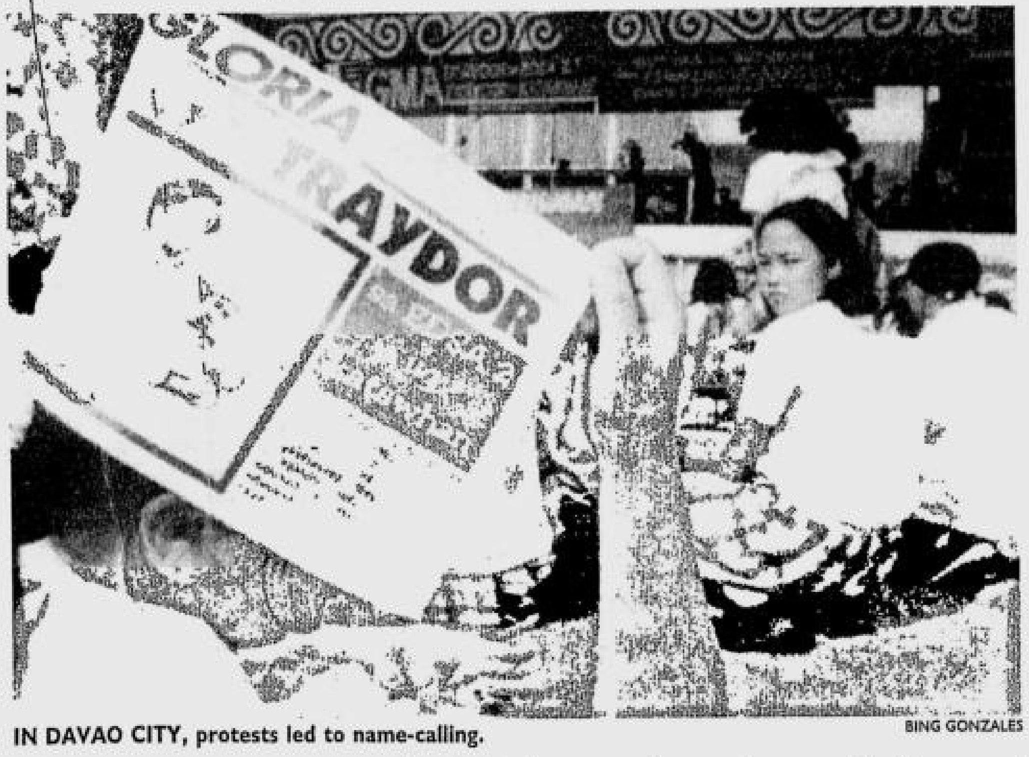
War games start faces more protests



IN DAVAO CITY, protests led to name-calling.

BING GONZALES

Bayan to hold caravan around air base used by US as holding bay for war jets

CEBU CITY—The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) will hold a protest caravan today to express their opposition to the presence in Mindanao and this city of American troops participating in the RP-US Balikatan Exercises.

Paul Rodriguez, Bayan chair of Central Visayas, said the caravan will start at 9 a.m. and proceed to the Mactan Benito Ebuen Airbase in Lapulapu City, Mactan Island, Cebu.

Rodriguez said they wanted to express their relentless opposition against the Balikatan exercises that will formally start today in Zamboanga.

Capt. Enrico Canaya, the airbase's Tactical Operation Command spokesperson, said they would allow the militant groups to stage demonstrations at the MBEAB despite the tight security measures imposed after a homemade bomb was recovered near its gate last Sunday.

He said Air Force officials do not consider the militant groups as a threat to the security of the airbase.

He added that the ongoing investigation of the bomb scare had not also pointed to the militant groups as those responsible for putting a Molotov bomb near the airbase's Gate 2 last Sunday.

Rodriguez denied that their group had placed the bomb near the gate, saying some "pro-American groups" wanted to frame Bayan and other groups opposed to the presence of American soldiers to stop them from holding demonstrations.

Canaya said there would be no significant activity at the Mactan Airbase today with the start of the joint military exercises.

The 220 American soldiers now based at the MBEAB were just waiting for instructions from Zamboanga, he added.

The American soldiers arrived at the MBEAB over the weekend to serve as maintenance crew to US aircraft participating in the Balikatan exercises.

Six American aircraft—three C-130 cargo plane and 3 MH-47 helicopters—have also been placed on standby at the airbase.

Canaya said the American soldiers are required to follow the guidelines imposed at the airbase. They are also limited to designated areas in the MBEAB, he added.

The American soldiers are billeted at undisclosed hotels in Lapulapu City. ***Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau***

Women mark Valentine's with rally in Clark

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Wearing red shirts and holding red balloons, some 50 women in Pampanga on Thursday spent their Valentine's Day in a mid-morning picket condemning the presence of American troopers in Clark.

"We love Yankees out," the women shouted as they burned the United States flag at Clark's main gate.

More than 20 guards of the Clark Special Economic Zone rushed to secure the main gate with barbed wire fences.

The picket, organized by the Pagkakaisa ng Kababaihan para sa Inang Bayan (Kaisa-Ka), also called for the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement.

American soldiers have been holding joint trainings in Clark and other Luzon camps with Filipino soldiers since 1999 under the VFA.

Fanny Salas, a leader of Kaisa-Ka, said the VFA exercises, including the Balikatan 02-1 exercises in Mindanao, were "no less preparations for war."

In war, women are "victims of deliberate gender forms of violence and persecution such as rape and sexual slavery, which are weapons of war initiated by imperialist aggressors," she said.

Salas said Kaisa-Ka's Wag War! (Women Against Globalization! Women Against War) campaign that started last month has gathered more than 20,000 signatures from women who expressed concern for the safety of Mindanao women and children.

Kaisa-Ka, in a statement, also condemned President Macapagal-Arroyo for calling oppositors of VFA exercises as anti-Filipinos.

"We love to hate Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. She's the real anti-Filipino because of her rabid pro-globalization and pro-US war policy," Salas said.

Protests also greeted the arrival of US troops in Mindanao for another set of military exercises aimed at helping Philippine soldiers bring down the Abu Sayyaf.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had denied that the exercises were meant to facilitate the release of an American couple seized by the bandit group.

She said the exercises would follow a new set of curriculum that was designed to fight terrorism.

The Abu Sayyaf had been linked to the international terrorist network of Osama bin Laden, the suspected mastermind in the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon Building in the United States.

Ms Macapagal came under fire from leftist groups and legislators from the opposition for her decision to let the American soldiers into the country for the war games. ***Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

HOME!
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A MEMBER of the Aklas Mindanao coalition wears a black mask painted with anti-US slogan on a silent protest at the Gaisano Mall in Davao City.

RYAN LIM/ PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

‘QUIET’ CELEBRATION

Firecracker ban spoils Chinese New Year

DAVAO CITY—The Filipino-Chinese community here celebrated the Chinese New Year with the traditional 'Kung Hei Fat Choy," but minus the noise of firecrackers.

Yesterday's celebration was in sharp contrast with that of last year's, when Chinoys spent thousands of pesos on pyrotechnics.

The economy has nothing to do with the absence of the loud explosions. What spoiled the fun was Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's standing order banning firecrackers.

"The use of firecrackers during the Chinese New Year is not for fun. It serves a purpose (which is) to ward off evil spirits," John Gaisano, a Filipino-Chinese businessman said.

Even then, Gaisano said members of the Chinese community did not think twice about obeying Duterte's order against pyrotechnics.

Last year, during the celebration of Christmas and the Christian New Year, Davao City recorded a near-zero injury because of Duterte's firecracker ban.

"We agreed with the policy of the city government because it is for the good of everyone," Gaisano, former president of the Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry said.

Acting Mayor Luis Bonguyan said Duterte, who is on leave, asked him to implement the firecracker ban.

But he said that even without the mayor's order, the Chinese community could still not explode firecrackers because of a 1948 city ordinance, which stipulates that fireworks are only allowed on Independence Day, Christmas and New Year's Eve.

"The ordinance has not identified Feb. 12 or a Chinese New Year's day as exceptions to the firecracker and fireworks display ban," Bonguyan said.

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HIGHER PASSING RATE

Fewer cadets flunking, says PMA exec

BAGUIO CITY—Either Philippine Military Academy cadets are getting smarter or they are getting aware of their parents' tightening belts.

Brig. Gen. Eduardo Purificacion Jr., PMA assistant superintendent, said the degree of failure among cadets has dropped much lower than the previous years.

"In terms of academics, they are looking good. In the past year, the degree of failure was about 60 percent. Now, it is about 20 percent," Purificacion said.

"In the past, many cadets were failing in subjects that even a very high grade in the last examination would not offset this," Purificacion said.

"Remember, each cadet's one-year stay in the academy still costs the government P500,000," he added.

Maj. Gen. Rufo de Veyra, PMA superintendent, said the Sundial Covenant, which was forged by the cadets last year to combat bullying and poor academics, is paying off.

He said failing students are now tutored by their *mistahs* (classmates) and the study period at night has been prolonged.

He also said instructions are more hands-on.

Commodore Juan de Leon, former PMA superintendent, was the first to institute reforms in 1999 after a PMA study showed that the average success rate for one class in PMA is about 38 percent.

He set up a "pre-cadetship training" for plebes so they can hone their mathematics skills and English language proficiency, the courses where most cadets fail.

A study commissioned by former PMA superintendent, Maj. Gen. Melchor Rosales, in 2000 showed that the attrition rate among cadets was mainly due to poor academics, followed closely by boredom. Forty-one percent of the members of PMA Classes 2000 to 2002 at that time either dropped out or were turned back because of poor academics while 16.5 percent said they were bored.

De Veyra said the PMA is also introducing a course on anti-terrorism that will be complemented by search and rescue courses to reinforce cadet response to disasters.

The training courses were initiated by the Department of National Defense last year, "as a reflection of Filipino military training following the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks in the United States," Capt. Edgard Arevalo, PMA spokesperson, said.

De Veyra cited the response made by PMA cadets during the 1990 earthquake as a need to initiate the subject.

"Cadets responded with bare hands and they were quite ineffective . . . with the subject, they will be able to respond with expertise and with the aid of machines," he said.

De Veyra, however, said an anti-terrorism subject would only be a special subject of the cadets and should not be included in their academic curriculum. ***Frank Cimatu with reports from Jovelyn Reyes and Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The Eastern section of the country will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers becoming widespread rains over Northeastern Mindanao. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy skies.

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	HI30° Lo 22°
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	HI 22° Lo 13°
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	HI 28° Lo 18°
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	HI 32° Lo 21°
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	HI 30° Lo 21°
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	HI 28° Lo 20°
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	HI 28° Lo 23°
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	HI 29° Lo 19°
Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy	HI 31° Lo 21°
Roxas	Partly Cloudy	HI 30° Lo 20°
Cebu	Partly Cloudy	HI 31° Lo 24°
Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains	HI 30° Lo 23°
Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy	HI 33° Lo 24°
Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy	HI 34° Lo 25°
Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy	HI 31° Lo 23°
Davao	Partly Cloudy	HI 31° Lo 23°

Compiled by: Ray Leyesa, PDI Research/02/15/02

ROUNDUP

Gang leader unmasked

STO. DOMINGO, Albay—Police have identified the alleged leader of a gang believed responsible for a series of robberies in the province. Police said the alleged leader was identified through a sketch whose details were narrated by the daughter of a robbery-holdup victim, SPO3 Roweno Cortez, a Catanduanes policeman. Police named one Sergio Bejo Jr., a native of Bacacay town who migrated to Manila, as the alleged mastermind. ***Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

9 hurt in collision

BATANGAS CITY—Five passengers, two bus drivers and two conductors were injured when buses of JAM Liner and Batangas Aircon Express Transit collided along the diversion road in Barangay Balagtas, this city, the other day, police said. The victims were brought to the Batangas Regional Hospital and the St. Patrick Hospital. Police said the slippery road might have caused the accident. ***Mei Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

3 cops suspended

PALO, Leyte—Three police officers were suspended on Monday for grave misconduct. Records at the Police Regional Internal Affairs Service based in Camp Ruperto Kangleon here showed that Chief Supt. Nardito Yoro, police director for Eastern Visayas, meted out a 46-day suspension to PO2 Eduardo Resma of MacArthur town in Leyte for grave threats. Yoro also suspended SPO4 Orlando Aujero of the Tacloban City police and SPO4 Gilbert Bueno of the provincial police for 10 days for failing to pay their debts to a moneylender. ***Cynthia Borgueta, PDI Visayas Bureau***

Employees' protest

BUTUAN CITY—Pag-Ibig employees here started to wear black armbands and sashes, and distributed leaflets denouncing a Congress proposal to merge the agency with the National Housing Authority. Edmund Baldes, information officer of the Pag-Ibig sub-regional office, said the protest was part of a nationally coordinated action. He cited employees' fear that the merger, leading to the creation of a Department of Housing, could result in a "massive hocus-pocus" of the agency's billion-peso funds. He said his group hoped to gather a million signatures nationwide at the end of the week-long protest. ***Franklin Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

'Kaamulan Festival'

MALAYBALAY CITY—The provincial government set aside P2 million for the 15-day celebration of the "Kaamulan Festival" starting Feb. 23. Gov. Jose Maria Zubiri Jr. said the amount would help showcase the province as a good investment area for agriculture and other industries. Ella Barroso, provincial tourism officer, said the province was expecting an increase in tourist arrivals and was hoping to draw local and international investors. "There are so many activities lined up. At the moment, the hotels here are almost fully booked," Barroso said. ***Grace Cantal-Albasin, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Baguio's new vicar

BAGUIO CITY—Bishop Carlito Cenzon, 63, will be installed as the new vicar apostolic of Baguio and Benguet on March 14. Cenzon, a native of Baguio, will replace Bishop Ernesto Salgado who was transferred to Ilocos Norte last year. Cenzon was bishop of the vicariate of Kalinga and Apayao before he was assigned to Baguio. ***Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

Ople, Reyes awarded

HAGONOY, Bulacan—Sen. Blas Ople and former press secretary Rodolfo Reyes led awardees during the 420th founding anniversary of this coastal town last week. Mayor Felix Ople, son of Senator Ople, said the awards were given for the first time to recognize the outstanding sons and daughters of Hagonoy. Ople received the Gawad Magat Salamat, the highest award conferred in the rites. Reyes led the recipients of the Gawad Dangal ng Bayan 2002. Other awardees were Rep. Wilhelmino Sy-Alvarado, Associate Justice Ruben Reyes, National Historical Institute Chair Pablo Trillana III and Chief Supt. Miguel Coronel of the PNP National Drug Law Enforcement Coordinating Center. ***Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

Baguio cops to use dogs to detect explosives

BAGUIO CITY—The police will deploy bomb-sniffing dogs to business establishments in the city following the discovery of an improvised bomb in a department store here on Tuesday.

Policemen defused the bomb at 1 p.m. Tuesday. The improvised bomb, placed inside a juice box, had a timing device and contained at least a kilo of commercial explosives.

Supt. Villamor Bumanglag, city police director, met with security guards from different establishments in the city to warn them to be more cautious and monitor suspicious looking packages.

Bumanglag said the Camp John Hay Development Corp. would lend its K-9 dogs to the police to help them in the random monitoring of business establishments.

To protect residents and shoppers in the city, police will train security guards to detect and defuse bombs and other explosives, he said.

The bomb found in Tiong San Bazaar on Magsaysay Avenue contained 3 AA-sized batteries, an alarm clock used as a timing device and seven plastic packs of explosives labeled "Magnum 5151." The timer was set at 3 p.m.

The package was left in the store's baggage counter on Friday last week. The store's security guard discovered the bomb after the package was left unclaimed for four days. ***Jovelyn Reyes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

UNWANTED RAIN

Tobacco industry dying, says lawmaker

CANDON CITY—The Virginia tobacco industry, the main cash crop and source of billions of pesos in excise taxes for the province, is dying due to bad weather, Ilocos Sur Rep. Eric Singson said.

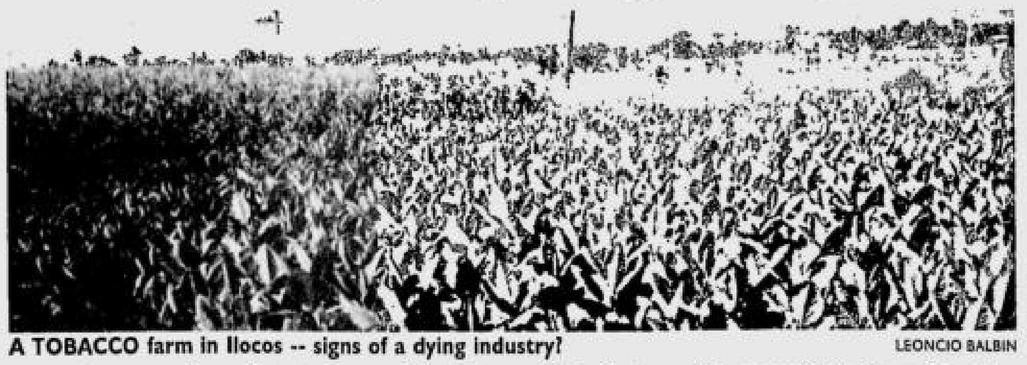
"It is dying because of natural causes, particularly bad weather," he said.

He said Virginia tobacco growers owe huge debts because of poor harvests in the last three years due to heavy rains that affected the quality of tobacco leaves.

The "unwanted" rains caused too much moisture on tobacco leaves, destroying the quality of the flue-cured tobacco.

"Farmers are neck-deep in debts because of poor harvests and losses in the past three years," Councilor Jaime Cobangco, a tobacco grower, said.

"Farmers have no more capital and there are a few buyers and traders willing to extend loans because they, too, have lost too much," he said.



A TOBACCO farm in Ilocos -- signs of a dying industry? LEONCIO BALBIN

This year, only 40 percent of 19,000 tobacco farmers in the province have planted tobacco while the rest have shifted to planting corn, peanuts and vegetables, Singson said.

On Monday, Singson, officials of the local government and the National Tobacco Administration met with tobacco farmers and discussed ways to save the industry.

To help farmers cope with the losses, the NTA will supervise the extension of loans to tobacco growers.

Farmers said they did not directly benefit from the tobacco industry because there was no improvement in their lives.

"The middlemen and tobacco traders gained the most," said Damaso Sanchez, 84, of Barangay Oaig Daya. Sanchez had been planting tobacco for decades but stopped in 1997 because of meager profits.

Farmers and officials here said even Republic Act 7171 or the tobacco excise tax law failed to help uplift the lives of tobacco farmers, the main beneficiaries of the law.

Under RA 7171, funds derived from the tobacco industry will be used to form cooperatives and create livelihood and agro-industrial and infrastructure projects like farm-to-market roads to benefit farmers.

Councilor Robert Tudayan and Cobangco co-authored a city council resolution asking for the automatic allotment of 40 percent from the excise taxes for tobacco farmers.

Half of the money will be used to buy farmers' production materials while the other half will be given to the NTA for loan assistance. "Instead of funding the needed production materials for farmers, less important projects were funded (by the releases), like concrete stages or (basketball courts where palay are dried)," Tudayan said.

The NTA said the price Class AA tobacco is pegged at P46 a kilo; Class A at P43; Class B at P40; and Class C at P37. ***Leoncio Balbin Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

RP, Indon, Aussie mayors agree to bring down pollution level

By Ma. Diosa Labiste
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Close to 50 city mayors from the Philippines, Indonesia and Australia have promised to push for cleaner air and more livable cities through the efficient use of fuel and electricity.

In a meeting on energy management and good urban management, the Asian mayors discussed ways on how to bring down air pollution and electrical consumption through waste management, reduction of emissions from vehicles, use of efficient street and traffic light bulbs and by planting trees.

The two-day meeting, which was hosted by the Iloilo City, ended on Feb. 13. Among its sponsors were the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Campaign and the League of Cities in the Philippines.

Cities that shared the successes of their environmental projects on the first day of the meeting were Cebu, Tagbilaran and Cagayan de Oro.

Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña said his city intends to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent, or from 10 million tons to 8.7 million, by the 2010 "without sacrificing growth."

This will be made possible by turning off air-conditioning units at the City Hall for at least an hour a day, using power-saving light bulbs in streetlights, calibrating the engines of city government-owned vehicles, anti-smoke belching campaign and tree planting.

Greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane, water vapor and nitrous oxide. The gasses trap some of the sun's heat, thus making the earth warmer. The increase of greenhouse gases affects global climate.

Osmeña said that by using energy-efficient light bulbs, Cebu City will save some P2 million every month.

Tagbilaran is a small city but suffers from air pollution due to smoke emissions from some 24,000 tricycles and motorcycles.

Based on the profile of Tagbilaran, 50 percent of pollution comes from transportation, majority of which are motorized vehicles.

The profile noted that majority of the tricycles are equipped with two-stroke engines, which emit up to three times hydrocarbons and other pollutants than cars or jeepneys.

Four-stroke engine motorcycles are more efficient in burning fuel and give off lesser emissions.

A study by Nobuhiro Kino of the Ministry of Environment of Japan and the ICLEI, noted that particulate matters and hydrocarbons emitted from motorcycles and tricycles are as much as 84 percent and 69 percent respectively.

It added that the air quality in the city "will be significantly improved if the emission from motorcycles is successfully reduced."

To reduce electricity, Cagayan de Oro City has "retrofitted" its market or transferred electric connections from the city government to stall owners last November 2001.

The move is expected to generate 153,940 kilowatts in two years, or a saving of P500,000.

Eastern Visayas nears self-sufficiency in rice, says exec regional agriculture

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Eastern Visayas is nearing rice sufficiency with the continued increase in its rice production over the last two years, the Department of Agriculture in the region said.

Leo Caqeda, the DA regional director, said barring unforeseen events, his office projects that Eastern Visayas will be rice sufficient by 2004 and rice importation from other regions will become a thing of the past.

Last year, rice production in Eastern Visayas reached 94 percent of the rice requirement of the region, up from the previous year's record of 84 percent.

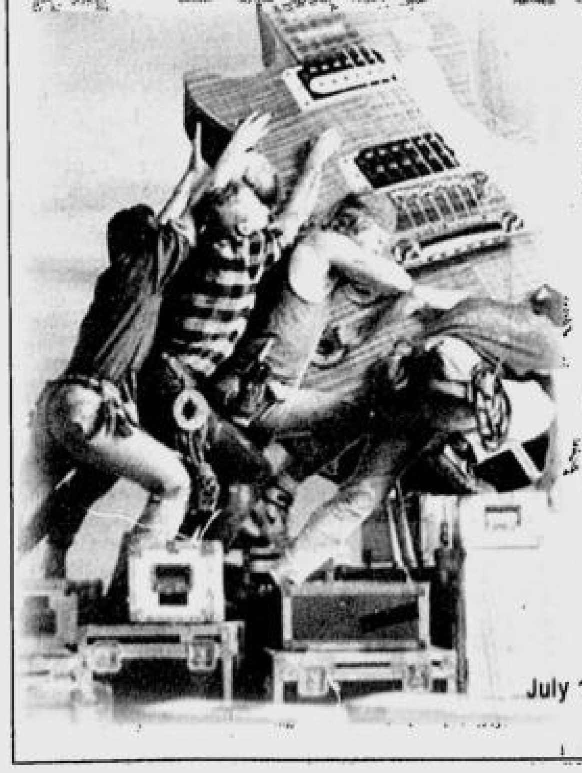
Caqeda said that the increase in the region's rice production last year is higher than the national rate. "The region registered a 5.1 percent (increase) vis-a-vis the national record of 4 percent in terms of total farm growth," he told the Inquirer.

The region's farmers produced last year around 600,000 metric tons of palay. In 2000, the region produced 550,000 metric tons of palay, Caqeda said.

Leyte province, which accounts for two-thirds of the land area in the region devoted to rice farming, produced around 300,000 metric tons of palay last year. Eastern Visayas has 137,000 hectares of land devoted to rice production.

With this impressive rice production, "only 6 percent is needed for us to achieve our target of 100 percent rice sufficiency for the region," Caqeda said.

The remaining rice supply that the region needs to feed its more than 3 million population comes from other rice producing provinces such as Iloilo, Davao and Northern Mindanao.



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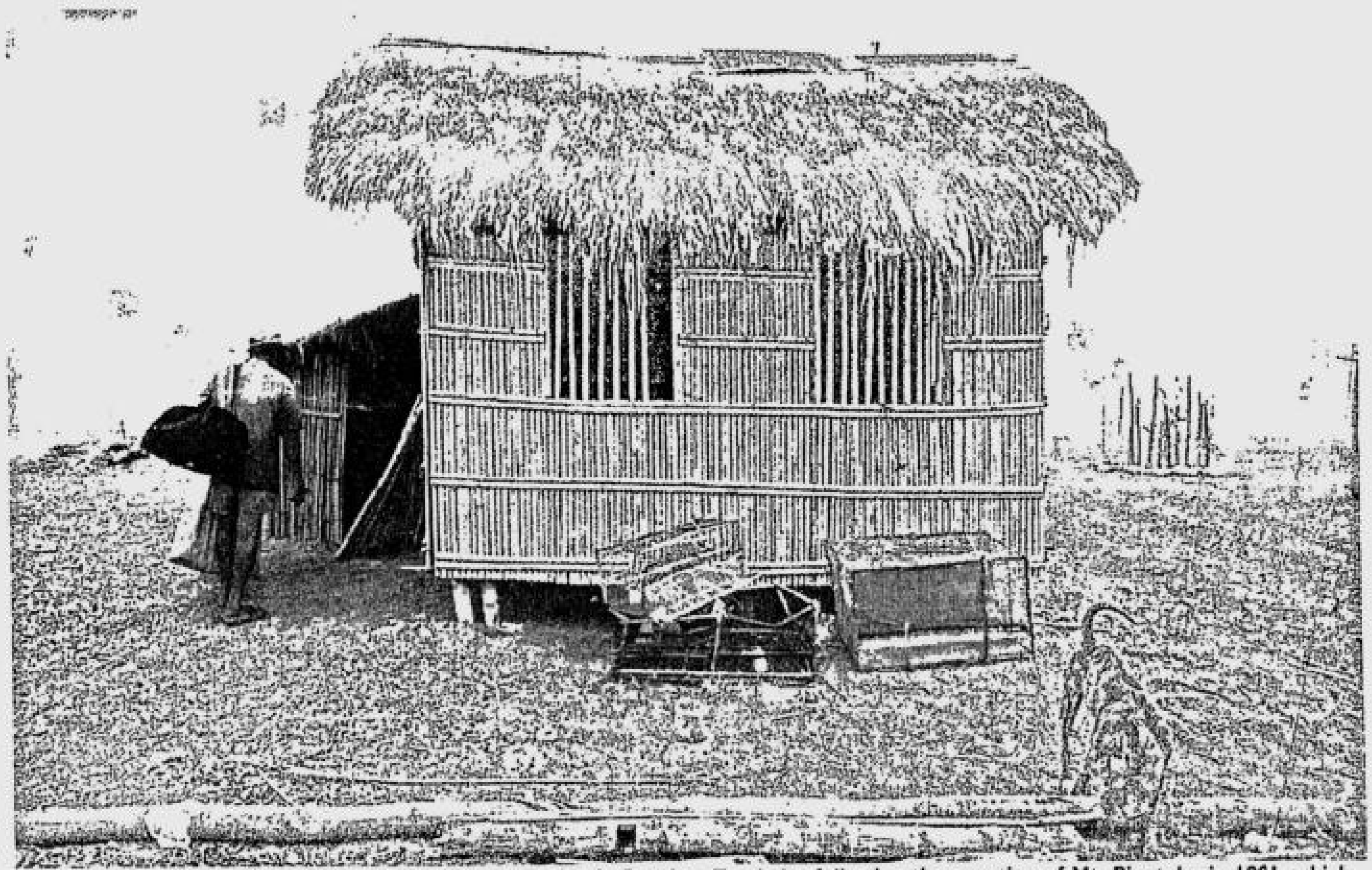
Aetas report signs of new Pinatubo eruption



A HUT stands alone on land declared unfit for habitation in Botolan, Zambales following the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991, which volcanologists said could be repeated.

FILE/JOAN BONDOC

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Government volcanologists are keenly watching for new signs of another Mt. Pinatubo eruption following reports by Aetas of unusual activities on the volcano's Pampanga and Zambales flanks.

In Zambales, Aetas in Sitio Nagsasa in Barangay Pundaquit in San Antonio town reported seeing "*bola ng apoy* (balls of fire)" and hearing "*kumukulo sa loob* (underground rumblings)" on the volcano's foothills since Wednesday.

Barangay Captain Manuel Santiago alerted the INQUIRER on Thursday about the observations of the Aetas.

Zambales Vice Gov. Ramon Lacbain II sent a team to Nagsasa to confirm the unusual sightings and help the Aetas if there was a need to evacuate them.

San Antonio town is 20 km southwest of the volcano.

Another volcano in the area, Mt. Negron, is inactive, according to July Sabit of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology.

In Pampanga, Aeta tribesmen in Barangay Kamias in Porac reported seeing an unusually large number of snakes descending from Pinatubo's slopes daily since last week.

The Aetas relayed their observation of snake migration through Abel Garcia, a Baptist worker who has lived in the village since 1984.

Porac is 15 km south of Mt. Pinatubo.

The 1,700-foot high volcano straddles the mountainous boundaries of Pampanga, Tarlac and Zambales.

Dr. Raymundo Punongbayan, chief of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, did not dismiss the reports although recent seismograph readings on the volcano did not in any way suggest fresh signs of volcanic activity.

Punongbayan, in a telephone interview, gave credence to the Aetas' observations.

He said the tribesmen, specifically those from Yamot in Botolan, Zambales, were the first to report the initial signs of Mt. Pinatubo's imminent eruption in April 1991.

The volcano erupted on June 12, 1991, ending its more than 600 years of slumber.

Punongbayan said the seismograph installed on the volcano's northeast side recorded only a series of tectonic quakes that were regularly monitored in the area. The quakes were triggered by movements of local faults in the area, he said.

Garcia told the INQUIRER by cellular phone from Kamias that the snakes appeared by the dozens, similar to what happened months before the 1991 eruptions. The snakes were poisonous and were as long as a meter, he said.

"We want to know if this (the unusual movement of snakes) is an indication of a strong earthquake or of another eruption," he said.

The Aetas, according to him, caught some of the snakes and ate them.

Punongbayan asked local authorities to verify if the "balls of fire" were mistaken for practice bombs used by the military in training exercises.

Sitio Nagsasa is near Talisayin where the Philippine and United States Navy hold training under the Visiting Forces Agreement. It is accessible only through a two-hour motorboat ride.

In Yamot and Villar, the Zambales villages nearest to the mouth of the volcano, the Aetas have not reported any visible indications of an impending blast, according to Jaime Sincioco, resident Pinatubo volcanologist.

He said among these include frequent tremors, gray or black smoke, emission of hot water in rivers and smell of sulfur.

Zambales officials said they have not received reports on the supposed renewed activity in Mt. Pinatubo.

Botolan Mayor Rogelio Yap said they are not discounting that possibility but added that they have yet to verify the information.

Godofredo Velasco, provincial chief of the Zambales Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council, also dismissed the reports, saying a team of doctors who recently went to Sitio Cabatuan in Botolan last week did not report any unusual activity in the area.

Sitio Cabatuan is about 12 km from Mt. Pinatubo's crater. ***Tonette Orejas with a report from Cesar Villa, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

Kidnapping fear keeps traders out of streets

COTABATO CITY—Businessmen here said they were spending less time outside their homes and offices to avoid being exposed to kidnapping gangs.

As this developed, Lucio Tan, president of the Cotabato Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, confirmed that some of the businessmen in this city have received threats from kidnapping groups.

Also, members of the Cotabato City Medical Society decided not to respond to night calls because of the same fear.

Dr. Teresita Mansilla, president of the CMS, said the fear of getting kidnapped developed among medical practitioners since the abduction of Dr. Rosemarie Agustin last month.

Mansilla said some doctors have also limited their movement in the city.

"We don't want to trust anymore. The fear of falling into the hands of kidnappers always hounds us. It appears nobody is safe now," she said.

When asked whether doctors would respond to "life and death situations," Mansilla said the medical society has not come up with a decision yet.

"We are lifesavers, we treat pains, not receive pain and agony from the hands of lawless groups," Dr. Abdulla Dumama, city health chief, said.

Oscar Tan Abing, an official of the Cotabato Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the latest kidnapping here has once again pulled down the local economy.

"Kidnappers target traders so we have to make our own security measures, avoid going out at night, avoid business conferences in the evening," he said.

Tan Abing also urged police and military authorities to take a proactive stance by preventing criminals from preying on individuals.

"If there are prior evidence that they (suspects) belong to kidnapping gang, they should be arrested before they could strike or take another victim," a trader who escaped a kidnapping attempt said.

Mayor Muslimin Sema said preemptive measures against kidnappings here would triumph with the purchase of several 9mm pistols, motorcycles, speedboats, and communication equipment by the city government.

Col. Essel Soriano, who heads the military's anti-kidnapping Task Force Sagittarius, said his command was instituting preventive measures. ***Charlie Señase and Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Tradition remains strong in Cagayan courtship, wedding rites

By Estanislao Caldez
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

TUGUEGARAO CITY—Nothing beats a time-tested way of winning a woman's heart on Valentine's Day.

In Cagayan, Ibanags and Itawes men express their love not only by giving Valentine cards and gifts to women but also by serenading them with traditional Ibanag love songs.

And the courtship does not end there.

To determine his fate, the suitor wraps his love letter in either a pink or white handkerchief and sends it through a respected community elder. The tribal elder then delivers the love letter to the girl's parents.

If the handkerchief returns in a week or two, it means the man is rejected. If not, the man's parents will choose a spokesman and represent the family to formally ask the girl's hand in marriage.

The spokesman, usually a reputable tribal elder, proposes to the girl on behalf of the man.

When the man's relatives and the spokesman visit the girl's house, they bring food for the girl's family and discuss the wedding date and plans.

For the indigenous peoples in Cagayan, the traditional *pamamanhikan* is called "*mamasikkal.*"

The spokesman also discusses the form of dowry that the man wants to offer to the girl's family.

The giving of dowry like a piece of land and a carabao assures that the man is ready to support a family.

In deciding the couple's wedding date, Ibanags and Itawes consult the "calendar *rueda*," a perpetual calendar that reveals the best time for wedding and lovemaking.

Based on the "calendar *rueda*," couples should not choose wedding dates with pointed numbers like 1, 14 and on a night when the moon is bright.

Old folks warn the couples not to set their weddings on a new moon or when there's a crescent moon because it is believed to be "dangerous and unlucky."

The full moon, however, is the best time to tie the knot because it spells good luck, according to tribal elders.

Bayanihan spirit in the community comes alive during wedding day. Relatives of both parties and the villages work together in a *langan* or preparation of food during the wedding reception.

The community and the couple's relatives also donate food for the guests and pray for the couple's happiness.

In Nueva Vizcaya, 111 couples from various villages in the province were wed in a mass wedding ceremony on Valentine's Day.

Balloons and colored ribbons transformed the Bayombong gymnasium as a venue fitting the mass wedding of young and old couples. Packed lunches were served to the couples, their relatives and other guests in the gymnasium.

Ibalois Polon, 83, and Mania Mahiwan, 62, said their marriage was officiated in their native tradition in the 1960s after they migrated from Benguet.

"We are happy that our marriage has been legalized with no expense on our part," said Polon.

"This is a very touching and memorable moment because it is Valentine's Day. This date will never be forgotten as our wedding anniversary. It's like shooting two birds with one stone. It's our anniversary and at the same time, it's Valentine's Day," another couple said.

Chief Supt. Thompson Lantion, former PNP chief for police community relations, and his brother Ralph Lantion, a Commission on Elections commissioner, led local officials as wedding sponsors of the couples. ***With a report from Ben Moses Ebreo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

Hospital workers wear black hearts to protest delay in benefits

By Ma. Diosa Labiste
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Restive workers of the Western Visayas Medical Center (WVMC) have been wearing black hearts since Wednesday to protest the nonpayment of their benefits.

Hospital employees wore cut-outs of black hearts to demand the release of their longevity pay, the convertion to cash of their unused leave credits, hazard pay and 14th month pay.

They also sought the ouster of Dr. Jose Mari Fermin, the hospital chief, and Jerlinda Miranda, the accountant of WVMC, whom they said were remiss in their duties to hospital employees.

A statement signed by 415 members of the Western Visayas Medical Center Employees Association said they have lost "confidence in the capability, integrity and moral ascendancy" of Fermin and Miranda.

Among those who signed were physicians, nurses, midwives, utility workers, administrative personnel, security guards and dieticians.

The protest at WVMC enters its second month this week but no solution appears to be in sight. The Department of Health (DOH) sent Health Undersecretary Margarita Galon last month but the dialogue bred more enmity after hospital employees walked out when they failed to get definitive answers on when the hospital would grant their benefits.

Fermin said the employees' demand for the release of their benefits were legitimate but the hospital had "no money due to budgetary constraints."

He said the hospital's budget was reduced by P15 million last year. It was further cut last year by P3 million due to the government's austerity program.

Based on the Department of Health administrative order No. 178, the longevity pay is given to workers who rendered over five years of continuous service. The hazard pay is equivalent to 15 percent of the employee's salary.

The longevity claims of WVMC employees range from P1,000 to P39,000. The total cash conversion of leave credits reached P1.6 million for year 2000.

But the longevity pay, the hazard pay and the convertion of leave credits into cash will be taken from the savings of the government agency. The 14th month pay is given to government employees if their offices have available savings.

All the benefits are mandated under Republic Act 7305, also known as the Magna Carta of Public Health Workers and backed by circulars from the DOH.

Fermin said the hospital was not able to release the longevity pay, conversion of leave credits to cash and the 14th month pay because the hospital had no money.

PHOTO FROM DND

UNDER THE STEAMROLLER

Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes and Maj. Gen. Alfonso Dagudag watch as a steamroller prepares to crush various firearms seized from rebels in Cagayan de Oro Feb. 8.

Legislator says new department of housing won't hurt Pag-Ibig

DAVAO CITY Rep. Prospero Nograles gave assurances to some 4.9 million members of Pag-Ibig Fund that their contributions would remain intact should a Department of Housing and Urban Development be created by law.

Nograles, chairman of the House committee on housing and urban development, issued this assurance in a press statement to allay fears that the creation of the new department would give Malacañang authority to use Pag-Ibig contributions for its housing programs.

He said the sole purpose of the proposed Department of Housing, which is a Malacañang-certified bill, is to put various government agencies involved in the government's housing program into one umbrella.

The new department seeks to improve coordination in the government's program to provide housing to at least 300,000 families per year.

He said growing concern that Pag-Ibig funds would be appropriated by the government for public use once the Department of Housing is created and is completely baseless because contributions are considered private trust funds.

"It will be illegal for the government to touch Pag-Ibig contributions because those funds are considered private," Nograles said.

Nograles also gave assurances that the Pag-Ibig Fund would maintain its own charter and its funds would be independently administered by the agency's board of trustees. He said the only role which the proposed Department of Housing would be playing in relation to the Pag-Ibig Fund is the processing of housing loans by its members.

"I can assure you that the Pag-Ibig Fund will be amply protected. It will not be used as a collateral of (the) government," Nograles said.

Most solons back Erap bid for knee surgery in US

From page A1

the resolution but said that "I am in close contact with leaders of the House."

Dilangalen said among the signatories were Deputy Speakers Raul Gonzales (a former prosecutor during Estrada's impeachment trial) and Gerry Salapuddin, Majority Leader Neptali Gonzales, Representatives Prospero Nograles, Harlin Abayon, Marcelino Libanan, Augusto Syjuco and Butil partylist Rep. Benjamin Cruz, who is described in the House as the "eyes and ears" of the President in Congress.

Speaker Jose de Venecia did not sign the resolution but was "receptive" to the proposal, according to Dilangalen.

"You know how it is with Speaker De Venecia, nothing is impossible for him. Everything is OK," Dilangalen said.

The signatories said allowing Estrada to undergo knee surgery abroad would show Ms Macapagal's compassion and pave the way for healing and reconciliation with the political opposition.

"This is what you might call promotion of peace (and reconciliation)," said Aquino, who belongs to the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino and one of those circulating the resolution for signature.

Dilangalen said allowing Estrada to go to the United States would have "incidental political benefits."

"Yes! In the long run, this will be very good for the government because it shows that it has a heart," Dilangalen said.

Estrada's hand

Dilangalen said he discussed the resolution with Estrada last week and he welcomed the initiative.

On the first weeks of the arrest of Estrada last year, there were calls to allow him to go into exile to ease the political tension in the country.

Among those who floated the idea of sending Estrada abroad was President Macapagal-Arroyo, then Senate President Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. Pimentel had said that allowing Estrada, who has a big following among the poor, to leave the country would benefit the economy.

But the idea was dropped when it drew strong criticisms from militant and civil society groups.

In the Senate, the resolution authored by Sen. Blas Ople noted that before Estrada was removed from the presidency, he was offered to go on exile, which he refused.

The Senate resolution said that the probability of flight on the part of Estrada was nil as it would blacken his name forever.

It said his flight would suggest guilt and jeopardize his chances in the trial that can proceed anyway in absentia.

Hands off

Ms Macapagal yesterday said she was keeping her hands off the proposal to allow Estrada to go to the United States for surgery.

"In the past when I made a reaction about the issue of (Estrada's) house arrest, I got hit for trying to influence the Sandiganbayan," Ms Macapagal said.

"So I think it's better for me not to comment," the President said. "That's really a matter for the Sandiganbayan to decide anyway and not for me."

In the Senate, only five are against the resolution.

They are Senate President Franklin Drilon, Senators Renato Cayetano, Joker Arroyo, Francis Pangilinan and Senate President Pro Tempore Manuel Villar.

Drilon said the draft resolution signed by 19 senators violated the principle of separation of powers and was tantamount to telling the court how to decide on the petition.

"I believe the proper thing to do is to allow the Sandiganbayan to decide on Mr. Estrada's petition purely on its own merits, without any interference from any sector or branch of government," he said.

"In the same manner that we zealously guard and preserve the legislature's independence, we should endeavor to respect the constitutional domain of the judiciary," he said.

He said that if the Sandiganbayan approved the Estrada petition, the court could be accused of succumbing to external pressure.

Drilon said he was against the resolution as it could set a precedent and might encourage others with pending court cases to ask for a similar Senate endorsement.

The Department of Justice and the Office of the Ombudsman belittled the Senate resolution.

Justice Undersecretary Manuel A.J. Teehankee and Ombudsman Aniano Desierto said the resolution would have no effect on the Sandiganbayan, which is trying the plunder and other criminal cases filed by the Office of the Ombudsman against Estrada.

Persuasive influence

"The only body that has the authority over Estrada is the court," said Teehankee, the DOJ spokesperson. "(The Senate resolution) is not binding. That can only have persuasive influence over the court," he said.

The courts, which belong to the judicial branch of government, are not under the authority of the Senate, another independent branch of government, according to Teehankee.

"Senate resolutions, depending on their nature, are just recommendatory," he said.

Like Teehankee, Desierto said the Senate pressure to allow the former President to seek medical treatment in the United States had no legal weight.

"The Office of the Ombudsman does not agree with the (resolution)," Desierto said. "Unless they're able to prove it convincingly before the court, we can not allow it."

Desierto stressed that the lawyers for Estrada must first prove that the knee operation could not be done in the country.

"We have filed a manifestation this afternoon compelling the respondent to present evidence that proves the absolute necessity of such an operation abroad," he said. The court has scheduled it for hearing next week.

Desierto, the lead prosecutor in the plunder and other criminal cases filed against Estrada, said allowing Estrada to leave the country would be detrimental to the prosecution of the cases against him.

"It will place him (Estrada) outside the jurisdiction of the court," Desierto said, adding that the court's decision won't just be implemented without the presence of the accused.

Opinion

Dilangalen said the resolution, which would be filed next week, was not meant to impinge on the separation of powers between the three branches of government.

"This merely wants to express the opinion of the House but it has no binding effect. It's not a resolution to pressure anyone," Dilangalen said.

This was also the assertion of Libanan, Abayon and Nograles who confirmed that they had signed the resolution in a separate press conference.

"This may even trigger the much-needed healing process," Nograles said.

Nograles said the resolution called for Estrada to be allowed to seek medical treatment abroad for six months. "I don't think he would escape," he said.

But the six-month limit was not set forth in the draft resolution, which is co-authored by Representatives Abraham Mitra, Rozzano Rufino Biazon, Ronaldo Zamora, Abayon, Hussin Amin, Nograles, Syjuco and Gilbert Remulla.

Dilangalen said former impeachment prosecutors Antonio Eduardo Nachura, Salacnib Baterina, Oscar Rodriguez and Clavel Martinez also signed the resolution, as well as the so-called "Spice Boys"—Representatives Juan Miguel Zubiri, Robert Ace Barbers, Rolando Andaya Jr. and Federico Sandoval.

Nachura, chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments, confirmed that virtually all House prosecutors and majority of the congressmen had signed the resolution.

Nachura acknowledged that the resolution would reap political benefits for Ms Macapagal.

"I think so because it will show the compassion of her administration and the emotional quotient that according to (Rep. Florencio) Abad the President is lacking," Nachura told the INQUIRER.

Dilangalen said the resolution would be a "win-win" effort.

"Some quarters might misinterpret it because I am the prime mover (in the House) but this is purely on humanitarian grounds," Dilangalen said.

Dilangalen admitted that he was closely identified with Estrada, whom he regularly visits in the Veterans Memorial Medical Center.

Outside Congress, a Catholic bishop is opposing the resolution.

Bishop Ramon C. Arguelles, chair of the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, said allowing Estrada to go abroad for treatment would amount to a "double standard" in the justice system.

"If Estrada is allowed to go to the US to seek treatment, then other prisoners and accused should be allowed to go to the US to seek treatment," Arguelles said. A church group demanded the junking of the Senate resolution. ***With reports from Carlito Pablo and Armand N. Nocum***

Gloria confirms 'turf war' in PNP over kidnap cases

From page A1

lowing the creation of yet another anti-kidnap body.

In an interview in Valenzuela City, the President said she was trying to settle the overlapping jobs of two anti-kidnapping task forces, Naktaf and Task Force Dragon of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

"I have rewritten the implementing guidelines for the proposed anti-crime task force, so when that comes out then I think whatever turf war there might be will be clarified," Ms Macapagal said. Naktaf is headed by PNP Deputy Director General Hermogenes Ebdane while Dragon is under PNP Director Nestorio Gualberto, the CIDG chief.

Complicating the issue is Mendoza's earlier proposal to activate a new anti-kidnap group, Task Force Mindanao, to crack down on the Pentagon gang, which is holding Italian priest Fr. Giuseppe Pierantoni hostage.

Yesterday, however, Mendoza acknowledged the prevailing public perception that there are too many anti-kidnap bodies, whose functions could overlap.

"They say that the problem with our anti-kidnapping efforts is that we have too many task forces. But the truth is, we're just providing some windows of opportunities for the victims," he said.

Once activated, Task Force Mindanao would absorb Task Force Sanglahi-Pentagon, which was earlier created to take on the Pentagon gang. Task Force Dragon was revived to handle kidnapping cases in Luzon.

Aside from these groups, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the National Bureau of Investigation, have their own anti-kidnapping units. Naktaf, a composite police and military unit, is part of the National Anti-Crime Commission, chaired by Justice Secretary Hernando Perez.

Mendoza clarified that Naktaf would remain as "a coordinating agency" for all anti-kidnap units in the country, including Task Force Mindanao.

"Naktaf has its own mandate. It's coordinative and at the same time, they are also mandated to conduct operations," he told reporters after presiding over a meeting to map out strategies to stamp out kidnapping and other organized crime.

Chinese support

Mendoza also said he still enjoyed the support of key Chinese-Filipino leaders, contrary to the statements of anti-crime advocate Teresita Ang-See.

He said that James Dy, president of the Federation of the Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc., made a call on him yesterday morning and pledged to help him acquire technology and equipment in China for police investigation.

"I've talked with many Chinese, they're very cooperative with me," Mendoza said. "Ang-See has her opinion that has to be respected, but there are opinion of others that have to be respected also."

Ang-See had asked Ms Macapagal to reconsider her decision to extend Mendoza's term, saying she had virtually rewarded Mendoza for his failure in busting organized crime groups.

Mendoza said that identifying kidnap-for-ransom groups for "neutralization" was one of the strategies proposed to stem the rise of kidnap incidents. "We're focusing our efforts (on) identifying the perpetrators," he said.

But he admitted that there were some new "fly-by-night" groups that are cashing in on the lucrative kidnapping business.

Ex-Huk supremo . . .

From page A1

Taruc, now national chair of the Hukbalahap Veterans Association, Inc., hails from the municipality of San Luis in Pampanga. The Macapagals are from the town of Lubao.

Divide, rule

Taruc charged that "the President, wittingly or unwittingly, has given in to the divide and rule policy of the US government."

"I do not believe Gloria when she said the Americans are here to train our soldiers. Their presence here is a subtle way of dominating and using the Philippines once again. They will use us but they will do that using sugarcoated words. They are already doing that," he said.

Taruc said he was "not optimistic President (Macapagal) will be able to unite the Filipinos. I doubt it. She has no sincerity, she has no true understanding of what the country needs. All rhetoric, all politics."

At the same time, Taruc said Filipino soldiers did not need American help.

"Let Filipino soldiers do the fighting against Abu Sayyaf bandits and other terrorists because they can do it. The Filipino soldier is good."

He noted that Filipino soldiers "had proven their worth during World War II."

"There is no question again about the courage of Filipino soldiers today. The rank and file of Filipino soldiers are very good," Taruc said.

But he added that it was "all right for the Armed Forces to accept military equipment from the US government. Rich countries like the United States have a moral obligation to poor countries like the Philippines. There was a time when the Americans gave us a hard time too."

Right after the Second World War, Taruc recalled, "American soldiers used Filipino soldiers against Hukbalahap members. That's divide and rule. Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger called it low-intensity conflict."

"But they should let us decide for ourselves on how to solve our problems, like the Abu Sayyaf," he added.

Some 660 US personnel and 3,800 Filipino soldiers will participate in the military training exercises in Mindanao that begins next week and will last for six months.

"There is nothing wrong with accepting military aid from them. As I've said, the Americans have a moral obligation to Filipinos," Taruc added.

The Encyclopedia Britannica has called Taruc a "hero of the Philippine anti-Japanese resistance and leader of the Hukbalahap (Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon) movement from 1942 to 1954."

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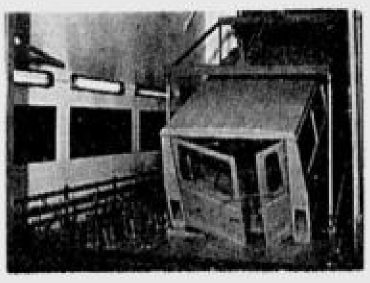

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US has apologized, says Macapagal

From page A1

cise, warned the Americans that the incident should not be repeated even as he said that Manila had accepted the US apology and no sanctions would be forthcoming as yet.

"I don't like it. (It is) an offense that should be corrected," Guingona told reporters. "The US commander has already told them (the US soldiers) and he has promised that it will not be repeated."

Nonetheless, the VFA Commission overseeing complaints over the joint exercises will still "note down" the incident, he said.

Under the VFA, Filipino and American soldiers taking part in the war games cannot carry firearms while off duty and not in uniform unless they have a specific mission order.

Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes said he had relayed the government's "extreme displeasure" to US Charge d'Affairs Robert Fitts who, in turn, assured him the incident would not happen again.

In Zamboanga City, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Diomedio Villanueva told newsmen that the alleged violation of VFA guidelines by the American soldiers was being dealt with.

"Let's see how things will go on," Villanueva said.

Officials of the Southern Command, where the American soldiers are staying, said they had asked the US commander to temporarily confine the soldiers inside the camp while a probe was going on.

The Southcom officials said the American soldiers were given a permit to go to the bank for an emergency withdrawal.

Suspicious-looking

Brig. Gen. Emmanuel Teodosio, co-director of the joint military training exercise, said the American soldiers who were escorted by Filipino soldiers noticed a "suspicious-looking group," prompting them to take out their long firearms from their vehicle.

"I think this is a reaction to what they perceived as a threat at that time," Teodosio said.

"I don't want to sound like an apologist . . . but we should look into this in the context of them being foreigners in a foreign land and probably they're not yet convinced that it's really safe to move around the country."

Teodosio said Filipinos should not be too harsh on the Americans.

"I think we, as allies, should be more forgiving and more understanding to one another," he said.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, a former AFP chief of staff, said the "ostentatious display" of firearms in public was against Philippine law.

"This is utterly insensitive to the feelings of our people," opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. added. "They should never have been allowed to do that, not in the name of anti-terrorism."

Another congressman called it a "callous display of arrogance" while still another blasted the Americans for turning Zamboanga City "into their wild, wild, west."

Surveys show that most Filipinos back US help against terrorism, but analysts say minor incidents like this one could fan opposition to the American presence.

All systems go

It's all systems go, however, for the controversial war games.

"Starting Sunday, we will be moving over to Phase 2 . . . the operational phase of the training exercise," Teodosio said.

The signing of the so-called "terms of reference" of the Balikatan exercise capped the one-month preparatory period that started on Jan. 15.

Manila and Washington on Wednesday signed the terms of reference providing for the ground rules of the training exercise, paving the way for the full deployment of US troops.

Gen. Charles R. Holland, commander-in-chief of the US Special Operation Command based at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida, flew into Zamboanga City on Thursday morning and had a closed-door meeting for about an hour with Fitts, Villanueva and Lt. Gen. Roy Cimatu, Southcom chief.

Villanueva said the American general inspected his forces taking part in the maneuvers.

Armed security men, however, prevented newsmen from talking with Holland who flew back to Manila later in the afternoon.

The first batch of US Special Forces is set to be deployed to Basilan on Sunday as the Southeast Asian phase of the US campaign on terrorism moves up a gear.

An "advance team" of about 32 members of the US Special Forces will be flown into Zamboanga City on Saturday.

They will be given training on "cultural sensitivity" and will be deployed to Basilan the next day.

More arrivals

About 400 other US troops are scheduled to arrive next week to join the six-month training.

The expected arrivals make up the bulk of the 660 US soldiers assigned to take part in the largest deployment of American forces abroad since the start of the ongoing US-led campaign in Afghanistan.

About 200 US soldiers, primarily logistics and communications personnel, are already in Zamboanga City.

The US contingent will include 160 US Special Forces commandos who will join their Filipino counterparts in patrols in Basilan against the Abu Sayyaf bandits, who are believed linked to the al-Qaida terror network of Osama bin Laden.

The Abu Sayyaf is also holding hostage an American missionary couple and a Filipino nurse.

"On Saturday, the first batch of the Alpha teams will be coming and be staying at the Malagutay training camp in Zamboanga City," Teodosio said.

"In the (succeeding) days, the remaining two batches will arrive to complete the 160 US Special Forces (team). They will be coming in close to one another," he said. "It would be a sizeable force."

"Next week, the full complement of those who are going to be assigned or disposed to the battalions of the (Army) brigade in Basilan will be around already," Villanueva told reporters.

The American contingent will advise their Filipino counterparts and boost the capability of both sides in fighting terrorism.

Although the US forces will not directly take part in combat, they are allowed to fire back when attacked.

The training ends in July, regardless of whether the hostages, American missionaries Martin and Gracia Burnham, are rescued, officials said.

During the latter part of the operation, pairs of US Special Forces troops will accompany Filipino military jungle patrols in Basilan. ***With reports from Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau; AFP and AP***

Kadhafi son offers to negotiate for release of Burnhams

TRIPOLI, Libya—Seif al-Islam, son of Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi, who has sent a plane to Pakistan to repatriate 44 Arab fighters detained in Afghanistan, says he wants to be a worldwide humanitarian ambassador.

In an interview with AFP, the 30-year-old Seif al-Islam said it was the Kadhafi Foundation, over which he presides, that negotiated the release of the fighters for "humanitarian reasons" in exchange for a payment.

The foundation gained international note in August 2000 when it facilitated the freeing of Western hostages being held by the Filipino Muslim rebel group Abu Sayyaf.

At the time, the international press spoke of large sums of money exchanging hands then, with some talking of as much as $25 million.

Now, Seif al-Islam says that if the United States asks him he would be prepared to negotiate with Abu Sayyaf for the liberation of an American Christian missionary couple being held by the group.

Last week, Abu Sayyaf gunmen renewed their demand for a $2-million ransom for the release of the couple, Martin and Gracia Burnham.

US troops last week launched joint operations with their Filipino counterparts to crush the rebels, who have beheaded a third American, Guillermo Sobero, as well as more than a dozen Filipino hostages.

Abu Sayyaf has been linked to Saudi militant Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror network.

While condemning "these terrorist groups" and voicing support for the military operations against them, Seif al-Islam said, "our good relations with the inhabitants of the southern Philippines allow us to enter into contacts with them."

While the Kadhafi Foundation has sent millions of dollars to Muslim groups in the southern Philippines, it has taken up causes elsewhere. ***AFP***

'Surprise witness' turns out to be Briones

By Cynthia D. Balana

A "SURPRISE witness" in the Senate probe of the sale of zero-coupon bonds that earned a group headed by a sister of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho a net profit of P1.4 billion said it was impossible for Camacho not to directly participate in the transaction.

Leonor Briones, former head of the Bureau of Treasury, yesterday told the Senate committee on finance that based on her experience with the bureau during the Estrada administration, the finance secretary was the approving authority in the issuance of bonds.

Briones also said that during her time, the bureau conducted a roadshow that lasted up to six months whenever there was a bond issuance to fully explain to the dealers and the people the features of the instruments.

The roadshow was in contrast to the apparent haste with which the Bureau of Treasury auctioned zero-coupon bonds, also known as Poverty Eradication and Alleviation Certificates (PEACe bonds).

The bidding was won by CODE-NGO, a group that conceptualized the bonds, which offered P10.169 billion for the bonds through an underwriter, RCBC Capital.

CODE-NGO is chaired by Marissa Camacho-Reyes. The government will pay P35 billion after 10 years upon the maturity of the bonds.

National Treasurer Sergio Edeza admitted at the hearing that they resorted to manual bidding and included many features in the PEACe bonds that were not present in previous bond issues to make them more attractive.

Edeza revealed certain "sweeteners" like the exemption from the 20-percent withholding tax was released 90 minutes after the opening of the Oct. 16, 2001 auction.

Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta said this further bolstered suspicions that the sale of the bonds was already a done deal.

Oreta said information on the Bureau of Internal Revenue's and the Monetary Board's rulings on the bonds that the Government Securities Eligible Dealers (GSEDs) had requested was released by the Bureau of Treasury only at 9:30 a.m. on the day the bond sale was opened at 8 a.m.

Had the information been given to the GSEDs much earlier, the bidders could have offered bids as competitive, if not better, than that of CODE-NGO, Oreta said.

"But what happened was that CODE-NGO officials, through RCBC, cornered the sale of the PEACe bonds apparently because they knew about all the 'sweeteners' attached to the deal way ahead of the other bidders.

The advanced information gave RCBC and CODE-NGO a big headstart in mobilizing funds for the auction, according to Oreta.

The documents pertained to BIR Ruling 0202002 exempting PEACe bonds from the 20-percent final withholding tax and Monetary Board Resolution No. 1545 concerning the liquidity reserve eligibility of the instruments and the tax exemption brought about by the 19-Lender Rule.

Because of the tax exemption, the government led to P5 billion in foregone revenue.

On the use of manual bidding in place of the electronic bidding, Oreta said this process was not a foolproof system.

She said the bids were faxed in which members of the technical staff of the auction committee could clearly see who the bidders were and the amount that they offered.

"I find it rather strange that the Bureau of Treasury dispensed with the electronic bidding system because its computer program was not suited for the 19-Lender Count," Oreta said.

Sen. John Osmeña, committee chair, said that Edeza's revelation on the added features of the PEACe bonds confused the dealers.

GMA blue: 'I feel like throwing in the towel'

From page A1

President for virtually surrendering to US President George W. Bush on foreign policy matters.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon charged that Malacañang's "cavalier attitude" to the so-called "terms of reference" governing the military exercises, which he called the only safeguard of the country's sovereignty during the war games, was a clear indication that Ms Macapagal had completely given way to Bush.

At the Valenzuela rites organized by the city government, however, Ms Macapagal said she had found the strength to carry on from the support she said she was receiving from the people.

She said she was elated after urban poor communities in Valenzuela presented her with a scroll that detailed their appreciation for what the government was doing for them.

"That's why the support I want to ask you is this: Tell other people about it, not just here in Valenzuela but also in other provinces," she said.

"Tell them what my administration is doing for the poor because you've felt what these are," she added.

Ms Macapagal said the people of Valenzuela, whom she said she was close to even when she "was still outside Malacañang," have themselves proven that "each time I come to visit, it's not for politics but to sit down and search for solutions to your problems."

Mindanao support

In Cotabato City however, Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Jesus Dureza had good news for the President. He said Mindanao governors and mayors were drafting a paper endorsing Balikatan.

Dureza said the group, led by Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Piñol, wanted the Americans to help the government in the battle against the Abu Sayyaf, which is widely believed to have links with Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida terrorist network.

"I was told that they (governors and mayors) are now in the process of preparing a joint manifesto that would show their support to the Balikatan project," Dureza said.

Earlier, Piñol said officials of Cotabato province had urged Ms Macapagal to expand the coverage of Balikatan to Central Mindanao, to upgrade the capabilities of the military and the police in combating the series of kidnappings in the region.

But in major cities of Mindanao, militant groups continued their opposition to the arrival of the American troops yesterday, declaring Valentine's Day a "national day of dating" to oust US forces.

In Butuan City, residents marched in the streets to express their love for Mindanao and shouted anti-US slogans. In Davao City, militants said Valentine's Day signaled the launching of a multi-sectoral coalition against the controversial joint military exercises. Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo led the crowd in denouncing the alleged surrender of the country's sovereignty to the Americans. Some 7,000 protesters took to the streets and affixed their signature to a manifesto rejecting Balikatan.

The Out MindaNow coalition said it was aiming to gather 1 million signatures against the military exercises.

Cavalier treatment

At the Senate, Biazon reminded the President that the Abu Sayyaf was a criminal group requiring police action and not military intervention.

"This is a mirror of the concerns currently being raised among Nato member-nations who are now feeling that other nations are being pushed toward US President George Bush's position graphically stated in his now famous, 'If you are not with us, you are against us,'" Biazon said.

The senator noted that no less than former US Vice President Al Gore was now questioning this unilateral US foreign policy.

Biazon said that the "cavalier attitude" of Malacañang toward the TOR is reason enough for a closer scrutiny of the following documents: the Balikatan 02-1 Exercise Plans and its annexes which should include the exercise maneuver plans; the exercise security plans; the exercise control plans and the exercise rules of engagement.

"If the TOR only contains general guidelines, the documents listed above would spell out the details that would govern the relationships, the limits of response that the US troops may be authorized under developing situations and the behavior of US troops while in the exercise areas which corresponds to the operational area of Southcom," he said.

Biazon said that it was important that the Senate committees on national defense and security and on foreign relations be provided copies of these documents prior to the forthcoming Senate hearing scheduled next week.

He also said that a close scrutiny of these documents was necessary in the light of statements which US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld aired over the C-Span cable channel a few days ago.

Rumsfeld had said that at present, there were 200 American advisers on Basilan island, and the number was expected to grow to 400 since a second batch of advisers was due to arrive in Jolo, Sulu, and other parts of Mindanao.

"These statements from no less than the US secretary of defense clearly provides for an escalation of the participation of American troops in the real-life conflict situation in Southern Mindanao," Biazon said. ***With reports from Cynthia Balana, Jerry Esplanada and Julie Alipala, Charlie Señase, Ma. Kristina Cassion and Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

GMA lifts ban on photo-ops

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo in a chance interview with Palace reporters yesterday said that she has lifted the media ban on her visits to urban poor areas.

"You can now join my urban poor visits," she said. "The ban is lifted."

The President did not explain the lifting of the ban, which was suggested by Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin in his homily during the first year anniversary of Edsa II last Jan. 20.

The influential prelate said then that the poor are the "jewels of society" and must be served away from the glare of media spotlight.

After the Mass held at the Edsa Shrine in Mandaluyong, the President promptly announced the ban.

It's official: Palace . . .

From page A1

He said Luli, Dato and their father arrived in Manila early yesterday morning from San Francisco to make it to the engagement dinner.

Where

Though Mikey refused to reveal the exact wedding date, he was enthused about its venue—the centuries-old San Agustin Church in Lubao, the hometown of the Macapagals in Pampanga.

The place, Mikey said, was his choice.

"I want my provincemates to be with me on the happiest day of my life," he said.

The church, completed in 1572, is one of more than 20 oldest and elaborately designed Augustinian churches in the province.

Between 1602 and 1608, it was said to have hosted the first printing press in the Philippines, which published many books in Kapampangan.

Mikey also chose to tie the knot there because the church is close to the President's heart.

Yearly, since her teens, Ms Macapagal never fails to visit the San Agustin Church during her birthdays, Mikey said. It was when she prays especially for her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal.

The Spanish church, according to Mikey, is a perfect setting for the "simple but elegant" rites.

"Nothing's extravagant about it," he said. Just the right setting for a lovely bride who will be gowned by designer Jose Salazar.

Angela, according to Mikey, wants to be in charge of all the preparations.

"All she wants me do to do is shed some pounds," he said. Mikey said he has lost five pounds since January.

Not fussy

"I guess we should plan the wedding now. We will use it (*pamanhikan*) as an opportunity to plan the wedding because I'm very busy so I don't know when I'll be able to sit down again to plan the wedding except tonight," the President told reporters earlier in the day yesterday.

The President, according to Mikey, had not been fussy about her son's wedding plans.

"All that she asked was if I was excited," the 32-year-old vice governor said.

His father, on the other hand, inquired if his son was ready to take on the challenge of married life.

"(My father) asked if I was really serious about settling down, if I was happy with Angela. I said yes and he seemed to be convinced," Mikey said.

Marriage, he added, is "sharing life with a dear someone."

Their being second cousins had never been an issue within the Arroyo or Montenegro clans, he said.

Mikey said the President, whom he calls "Nanay," approved of the 27-year-old, London School of Business graduate because "she's decent and very presentable."

Mikey and Angela first met in a family reunion in March last year. To prove he was serious with Angela and that "she is not going to be just one of my girls," Mikey said he flew to Baltimore last April to join her and her family.

"She had many apprehensions about me. She didn't believe that I love her," he recalled of the initial courting stage.

During the windup of the May 14 elections campaign, Mikey flew to New York to convince the reluctant Angela.

On June 30, Angela accepted Mikey's proposal and they officially became sweethearts. Angela joined Mikey in Pampanga for his proclamation as vice governor.

"I'm really sure about her. I'm happy being with her. She's very supportive," Mikey said. ***With a report from Dona Pazzibugan***

Scientists still wondering what's so great about sex

From page A1

still trying to pin down just what the payoff is.

"It's clearly one of the most fundamental questions in evolutionary biology," says William Rice of the University of California in Santa Barbara.

It is easy to forget that sex is not the only game in town for the plant and animal kingdoms. In fact, there are thousands of asexual species now, Rice said.

Many species of the whiptail lizard, for example, are all-female and just clone themselves with unfertilized eggs.

Scandalous

Microscopic creatures called bdelloid rotifers have reproduced through asexual cloning for tens of millions of years. And this greatly annoys scientists who say no creature should be able to keep doing this for so long.

Rotifers, in fact, have been called an evolutionary scandal.

Imagine that: a no-sex scandal, instead of a sex scandal.

At first blush, it makes some sense to have self-reproducing females and just dispense with males altogether—even before you consider things like singles bars.

After all, if your job is to pass on your genes to future generations—and according to evolutionary biology, that is your job—sex just gets in the way.

Risks of sex

Consider the notion of two sexes mating.

Each female passes only half her genes to each offspring, rather than all of them. And on the average, about half her brood ends up without a womb (the males), which chops the next generation's productive capacity in half.

What's more, sex breaks up the successful gene combinations found in the parents and gambles on new, untried mixes in the next generation.

Does that make any sense? Maybe.

It's pretty clear, scientists say, that the evolutionary lure of sex has something to do with that gene-mixing.

While clones merely pass along their genetic endowment in a chunk, sexual species shuffle the deck.

To understand that, remember that the genetic makeup of an organism is somewhat like a baseball team. Everybody has a full team, with all the positions covered, but who plays at each spot differs. And there are good players and bad players in the same way that there are good genes and bad genes.

Clones essentially pass their own rosters on to their offspring, while sexual species create new rosters.

Why then tinker with a successful genetic lineup?

Why sex is good

Currently, most scientists offer two general theories about why sex is so good: It helps a species get rid of harmful mutated genes, or alternatively, it helps the population take advantage of beneficial mutations.

Call it bad genes versus good genes.

The explanation could be some combination of those two ideas, although scientists suspect one or the other is probably the major factor.

The bad-gene idea says sex can make the faulty genes sitting ducks for elimination by natural selection—by separating them from good genes as they pass through generations.

It can group bad genes together so they get wiped out in batches when the unfortunate recipients don't reproduce.

Sex can also break up harmful combinations of genes, even when each by itself isn't so bad.

The second view says sex can help good genes spread through a species or bring favorable combinations together, speeding up evolution and helping species adapt more quickly to changing environments.

One version, for example, says sex helps defend populations against evolving parasites and germs.

Why humans won't go extinct

Rice conducted an experiment where he gave fruit flies bogus chromosomes, then checked the eye color of thousands of their descendants.

Results of that study bolstered the idea that sex helps good genes spread through a population. It showed that a favored gene spreads more quickly if it appeared on a chromosome that participates in gene-shuffling than if it did not.

The experiment also found evidence that harmful mutations accumulate faster without gene-shuffling.

In fact, Rice said, it appears that humans naturally produce harmful mutations so often that we'd go extinct if we didn't use sex to get rid of them.

How about that. We have sex to do a favor to the human species.

Most evolutionary biologists probably favor theories about promoting the spread of good genes rather than those focusing on eliminating harmful mutations, said gene expert Peter Keightley of the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

His own pick?

"I'm still open. We need better data to decide."

Alexey Kondrashov of the National Center for Biotechnology Information said he favors the harmful-mutations idea.

But he, too, would like to see some definitive research findings—on whether most animals suffer enough bad mutations to justify sex—and get the whole debate over with. **AP**

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BACOLOD	5J - 473	Daily	0610	0710	P2,498	P2,199	-	P1,949
	5J - 475	Daily	1000	1100				
	5J - 479	Daily	1640	1740				
ZAMBOANGA	5J - 851	Daily	0620	0750	P3,295	P2,639	P2,399	P2,399
ROXAS	5J - 373	Daily	0530	0630	P2,279	P1,979	P1,749	P1,649
DUMAGUETE	5J - 627	Daily	1340	1450	P2,608	P2,309	P1,999	P1,999
KALIBO	5J - 339	Daily	0950	1040	P2,608	P2,309	P1,999	P1,999

ORIGIN: CEBU

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
MANILA	5J - 558	Daily	0500	0610	P2,608	P2,309	-	P1,999
	5J - 562	Daily	0900	1010				
	5J - 564	Daily	1100	1210				
	5J - 566	Daily	1200	1310				
	5J - 568	Daily	1600	1710				
	5J - 570	Daily	1700	1810				
	5J - 572	Daily	1800	1910				
	5J - 574	Daily	1900	2010				
DAVAO	5J - 593	Daily	0825	0915	P2,339	P2,039	-	P1,649
	5J - 597	Daily	1510	1600				
ZAMBOANGA	5J - 431	M/W/Th/F/Sat	0750	0845	P2,388	P2,089	-	P1,799
ILOILO	5J - 162	Daily	0650	0725				P1,399
	5J - 164	Daily	1700	1735	P1,799	P1,599	-	
BACOLOD	5J - 126	M/W/Th/Sat	1150	1220	P1,599	P1,399	P1,199	P1,199
CLARK	5J - 588	Tu/F/Sun	1125	1245	P2,995	P2,669	-	P2,399

ORIGIN: DAVAO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
MANILA	5J - 962	Daily	0720	0900	P3,307	P2,919	-	P2,399
	5J - 964	Daily	1220	1400				
	5J - 966	Daily	1640	1820				
	5J - 968	Daily	1800	1940				
CEBU	5J - 594	Daily	0955	1045	P2,339	P2,039	-	P1,649
	5J - 598	Daily	1530	1620				
ILOILO —via Cebu	5J - 598/164	Daily	1530	1735	P3,295	P2,839	P2,549	P2,549
ZAMBOANGA	5J - 393	M/W/F/Sun	1010	1110	P2,388	P2,089	-	P1,799

ORIGIN: ILOILO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
MANILA	5J - 452	Daily	0800	0900				
	5J - 456	Daily	1135	1235	P2,498	P2,199	-	P1,949
	5J - 460	Daily	1815	1915				
CEBU	5J - 161	Daily	0710	0745	P1,799	P1,599	-	P1,399
	5J - 165	Daily	1740	1815				
DAVAO —via Cebu	5J - 161/593	Daily	0710	0915	P3,295	P2,839	P2,549	P2,549

ORIGIN: CAGAYAN DE ORO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
MANILA	5J - 382	Daily	0715	0840	P3,295	P2,919	-	P2,399
	5J - 384	Daily	1155	1320				
	5J - 386	Tu/Th/Sat	1515	1640				

ORIGIN: TACLOBAN

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
MANILA	5J - 652	Daily	0800	0910	P2,718	P2,419	P2,119	P1,999
	5J - 656	Daily	1400	1510				
	5J - 658	Sunday	1600	1710				

ORIGIN: CLARK

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
CEBU	5J - 589	Tu/F/Sun	1325	1445	P2,995	P2,669	-	P2,399

ORIGIN: BACOLOD

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
MANILA	5J - 474	Daily	0800	0900	P2,498	P2,199	-	P1,949
	5J - 476	Daily	1150	1250				
	5J - 480	Daily	1830	1930				
CEBU	5J - 125	M/W/Th/Sat	1310	1340	P1,599	P1,399	P1,199	P1,199

ORIGIN: ZAMBOANGA

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
MANILA	5J - 852	Daily	1150	1320	P3,295	P2,639	P2,399	P2,399
CEBU	5J - 432	M/W/Th/F/Sat	0925	1020	P2,388	P2,089	-	P1,799
DAVAO	5J - 394	M/W/F/Sun	0830	0930	P2,388	P2,089	-	P1,799

ORIGIN: ROXAS

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
MANILA	5J - 374	Daily	0710	0810	P2,279	P1,979	P1,749	P1,649

ORIGIN: DUMAGUETE

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
MANILA	5J - 628	Daily	1530	1640	P2,608	P2,309	P1,999	P1,999

ORIGIN: KALIBO

DESTINATION	FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA	ONE-WAY FARES			
					NORMAL	VALUE	PROMOTIONAL	2-DAY ADVANCE PURCHASE
MANILA	5J - 340	Daily	1120	1210	P2,608	P2,309	P1,999	P1,999

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

FROM - TO		FLT NO.	FREQ.	ETD	ETA
MANILA -	HONGKONG	5J - 112	Daily	0850	1050
		5J - 118	Daily	1640	1840
HONG KONG -	MANILA	5J - 113	Daily	1150	1350
		5J - 119	Daily	1940	2140

NOTES:
- *All tickets are REFUNDABLE, REROUTABLE and UPGRADABLE to valid higher fare types. All issued tickets are NON-TRANSFERRABLE.*
- *2-day Advance Fare selling period until 13 March 2002 only. Travel validity is from 07 January - 15 March 2002 only.*
- *Booking and rebooking requirements for 2-Day Advance Purchase fares must be strictly adhered to.*
- *Insurance surcharge of P300 per sector is applicable to all fare types.*
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- *All fares are subject to government approval and are exclusive of government tax.*
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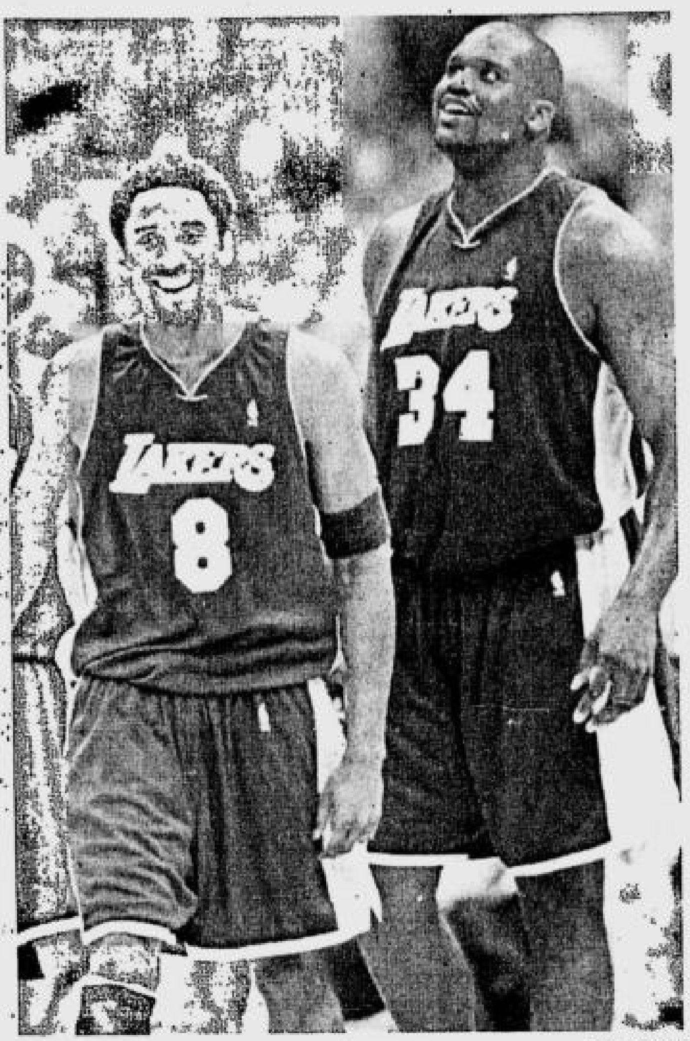
At 23, Kobe is best player in the world, says Shaquille



FILE PHOTO

LAKERS' main men Bryant (left) and O'Neal.

LOS ANGELES—More and more, it appears Shaquille O'Neal was right on the mark when he called Kobe Bryant the best player in the world during last year's Western Conference finals.

And the scary thing is, Bryant is only 23. With his work ethic and hard-nosed attitude, it seems a sure bet he'll get even better.

"I don't think there's anybody in the league who can stay in front of him defensively," Washington's Popeye Jones said after Bryant led the two-time defending NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers to a 103-94 victory over the Wizards on Tuesday night.

"It was him," Jones said when asked how the Lakers rallied from a 63-43 deficit to win decisively despite the absence of O'Neal.

Washington's Michael Jordan, who turns 39 Sunday, already had displayed his rare talents at Bryant's age. But Jordan didn't win the first of his six championship rings until he was 28.

Bryant already has two NBA titles.

Bryant went only 2-of-9 from the field in scoring five points as the Wizards took a 48-35 halftime lead, and the Lakers trailed by 20 a little over four minutes into the third quarter.

That's when Bryant took charge. And when it was all over, he had 23 points, 11 rebounds and a career-high 15 assists for his third NBA triple-double.

He went 7-of-11 from the field in the second half, and was especially brilliant at both ends of the court in the third quarter, when the Lakers scored a season-high 42 points.

"He realizes he doesn't have to score points," Lakers veteran Robert Horry said. "He's distributing the ball and making other players better. That's what makes a great player.

"He knows his teammates and what's going on. Kobe is one of the greatest guys you want to meet, and he works hard. You've got to respect him for that."

Respect was hard to come by for Bryant during the first half of last season, when O'Neal made it clear he didn't believe Bryant was doing what was necessary to help the Lakers win. And O'Neal wasn't alone.

Bryant finally seemed to get it after missing nine games and most of a 10th because of a sprained ankle late in the season. He was terrific as the Lakers went an unprecedented 15-1 in the postseason, and he hasn't taken a step back this season.

It was during that remarkable playoff run that O'Neal said: "It's good to play with the best player in the world on your team."

On Tuesday night, Bryant and Jordan hugged at midcourt before the game. *AP*

NBA results:

Charlotte 113, Chicago 91; Miami 112, Orlando 95; New York 89, Toronto 82; Minnesota 107, Phoenix 92; Cleveland 115, Milwaukee 107; Portland 114, Dallas 103; Golden State 92, Boston 75.

Double celebration

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

I AM happy for Batang Red Bull, my favorite team in the Philippine Basketball Association, and franchise owner Photokina Marketing Corp. for posting two well-deserved victories recently.

Last Tuesday at the Philsports Arena, coach Yeng Guiao's Red Bull Thunder steamrolled Shell Turbo Chargers, 94-81, to make an auspicious debut in the PBA Governors' Cup behind peerless import Joe Bunn, who dazzled the crowd with his game-high 47 points, 30 of which he scored in the first half alone.

And over in Quezon City, Judge Luisa Quijano Padilla of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court upheld the contract awarded to the Photokina-led consortium to set up the Voters Registration and Identification System (VRIS) aimed at modernizing the slow and controversial electoral process across the country via computerization, thus ensuring a fair, fast, honest and clean election for the first time in living memory.

In a recent eight-page resolution, Padilla directed Commission on Elections officials under Comelec chair Alfredo Benipayo to "immediately resume negotiations to formalize execution of the contract" which Photokina and its partners (which included business heavyweights IBM, Polaroid, Sagem SA and Unisys) won in an October 2000 bidding. Photokina submitted the lowest bid, P500 million lower than its closest rival.

The VRIS is a P6.5-billion project spread over five years designed to clean up the voters' database which contains the names of 35 million registered voters in the country. The database process involves the use of sophisticated technology—the Automated Fingerprint Identification System—for a tamper-proof voter ID card.

But back to basketball.

Coach Yeng Guiao said his 6-foot-3 import, prolific Joe Bunn, did not surprise him at all. "Bunn has always been unstoppable even in practice. He plays real hard to win our games. As I have been saying again and again, the team is ready; the imports are blending with the locals; and everyone's bristling with confidence." Red Bull seeks victory No. 2 this Sunday at the Big Dome when it plays ill-starred newcomer Federal Express in the first game of a twinbill.

On the team's success, Guiao credited the support extended by Photokina management headed by George Chua, a 47-year-old sportsman-businessman who is much admired for his pleasant demeanor. Red Bull made PBA history last August by winning its first ever championship, the Commissioner's Cup, in just five appearances. And on the way to the title, the team also won its version of a grand slam by defeating three sister teams—Ginebra (in the quarterfinals), Purefoods (in the semifinals) and San Miguel Beer (in the best-of-seven finals, 4-2).

V. Williams clobbers Kournikova

ANTWERP, Belgium—Top-seeded Venus Williams powered her way over Anna Kournikova in straight sets Wednesday to advance to the quarterfinals of the $585,000 WTA Diamond Games.

The American world No. 2 needed some time to settle in her first match on the fast, synthetic surface, but once she found her feet she pounded her Russian opponent into submission 7-5, 6-0.

In earlier action, second-seeded Justine Henin showed no mercy to her friend from Belgium's Fed Cup-winning team, racing to a 5-0 lead in barely 15 minutes against Els Callens before taking the match 6-1, 6-4.

In the quarterfinals, Henin will face sixth-seeded Magdalena Maleeva of Bulgaria, who beat Meilen Tu of the United States 6-4, 6-3. Williams will face the winner of Thursday's match between Italian No. 5 seed Silvia Farina Elia and Swiss qualifier Marie-Gaiane Mikaelian.

Agassi's new coach

SAN FRANCISCO—Andre Agassi confirmed Tuesday that he will work with new coach Darren Cahill.

Agassi split with longtime coach Brad Gilbert earlier this month. With Gilbert, Agassi won six Grand Slam titles, the 1996 Olympic gold medal and was No. 1 in the world at the end of 1999.

"It's been eight incredible years and neither one of us wants to run the risk of the coach-student relationship becoming stale," Agassi said. *AP*

SPORTSWATCH

Parañaque fishing slated

WITH "Mankind is Our business–Take Your Family Fishing" as activity theme, the Rotary Club of Parañaque North will host the 8th Annual District 3830 Fishing Tournament at the LWT 888 Fishing Restaurant on Covelandia Road in Kawit, Cavite on Sunday, Feb. 24, to promote rapport among Rotarians, their family members and friends, and raise funds for RCPN youth livelihood projects, RCPN president Darly de Roca said. For more details, contact RCPN's secretariat tel/fax: 551-3893 (Ms. Irene) or 832-3694 (Normie Alabado). Rotary Club of Makati Central had won the Club Team championship the last two years against over 15 participating clubs, taking custody of the Perpetual Trophy.

Orillaza bet solo champion

WINNING Time DVH-Jobo I of veteran derbyist Lito Orillaza scored 6-1/2 points to emerge solo champion Wednesday night in the NCA 7-Cock Derby at the Araneta Coliseum. Cat Stinger of Tarlac's longtime tandem of Peping Cojuangco and Esting Teopaco wound up a close second, posting six points in this derby hosted by Rep. Claude Bautista and Boyboy Roa. Three other entries finished third with five points, namely, Spencer Winslet of Dicky Lim, recent World Slasher champion; BG RT 114 Mapalad I of the E. Santos-B. Garcia combine and Mulawin of Frank Berin and Rep. Rudy Albano. LG Thunderbird-Firefly of Big Dome owner Nene Araneta, BL Laura of Boy Lechon and Louis Cua and Fantastic Kalvin of Alan Tan posted 4-1/2 points to land in the money. Meycauayan of Mayor Eddie Alarilla, Thunderbird-Firefly I of Nene Araneta, BPZ Sunshine of Boy Primalion and Binangonan MK of Gov. Ito Ynares and Manny Co tallied four points each to round up the top point winners. On Feb. 18-20, another all-star NCA 7-Cock Derby will be held, also at the Big Dome, with Gov. Ito Ynares and Manny Co hosting what could be the year's biggest NCA derby in town.

Pasay 4-cock meet on tonight

ANOTHER explosive 4-cock event unfolds tonight at the Pasay City Cockpit beginning at 7 . The 55-fight program will be sponsored by Sagupaan Super Feeds and Hammer Dewormer. To host the event is the JR Pasay Group assisted by pit managers Oscar Gonzales, Eric dela Rosa and Butchoy Olano. At stake is a whopping prize of P300,000 while entry fee is P10,000. Meanwhile, the 3rd Pasay Cockpit Cockers Association (PCCA) 4-cock derby unfolds on Feb. 22 with Arnel Pimentel, Joey Lapid and Bobby Cabillon as hosts. Veteran handler Muroy Dolorico's 4-cock promotion is slated on March 1. For other inquiries, please contact 816-6750, 843-1890 and 843-1746.

RACING TIPS

At San Lazaro By Mr. 999

Race 1—1. Far Out 2. Stradivarius 3. Everybodyhappy 4. Headliner 5. Good Quality 6. Classic Star

Race 2—1. Roulette Queen 2. Picardy 3. Silent Heat 4. Bright Task

Race 3—1. Gold Pyramid 2. Dream Play 3. Speed Master 4. Foolish Heart

Race 4—1. Free Wind 2. Powerhouse 3. Kayang Kaya 4. Patago 5. Free Entrance

Race 5—1. Hollywood Park 2. Palachik 3. Candy's Angel 4. Dynasty

Race 6—1. Golden Brook 2. Cheese Laffongga 3. Yes Sir 4. Shape of the Wind 5. Snowy Sea 6. Ginger Spice

Race 7—1. Marinela 2. Divine Diva 3. Raggedy Belle 4. Black Ijhay 5. Storm Dancer

Race 8—1. Gossip Column 2. Test Run 3. Queen of D Jungle 4. Snowy Lane

Race 9—1. Golden Prince 2. Choice for Change 3. Native Talent 4. Sand Splash 5. Replica 6. Courage

E. Ridge tilt tomorrow

THE MONTHLY medal tournament of the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club will be held tomorrow, Feb. 16, at the Aoki course of the country's biggest golf complex in Gen. Trias, Cavite.

Tee-off will be shotgun start at 7:30 a.m.

More than 100 members are expected to see action in the 18-hole tourney sponsored by Wilson Sports Inc. through JunJun Plana. It takes the place of what used to be the monthly Thursday Club tournaments.

Casino derby

CASINO Filipino-Parañaque in cooperation with IMP Group will present a 5-cock derby dubbed "Sabong sa Casino" on Feb. 26 and 29 with a guaranteed prize of P1 million plus trophy and a 21-inch colored TV for the champion. Derby organizers led by Rudy de Guzman and Isagani M. Pagkalinawan said the elimination (two-cock) will be on Feb. 26, while the championship (three-cock) will be on Feb. 28. For cockhouse reservations, call 838-5671 and 837-3037.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1993, De La Salle Zobel beat Masbate National High, 5-3, to retain the Luzon crown of the Coke Go-for-Goal Under-16 football tournament at the UP Los Baños field. Also today in 1993, Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla shot 1122 points to rule the standard pistol event eliminations at the Marine range in Fort Bonifacio.

PAL CATCHES CASAS

Felix "Cassius" Casas (third from left) has been named the Philippine Airlines official endorser. Casas, who will defend his Philippine Open crown at Wack Wack on March 7-10, will wear the PAL colors in all his succeeding campaigns on the Philippine golf circuit and the tough Asian tour this year. He will hit a ceremonial ball in the 55th PAL Interclub Golf Tournament in Bacolod City on Feb. 22. Witnessing the signing of the contract are (from left) Antonio Ocampo, Asian region tour director for golf operations of IMG Worldwide; Felix J. Cruz, PAL vice president for marketing; and, Jesus G. Garcia, PAL advertising and promotions manager.

New changes at Riviera; Woods quits due to virus

LOS ANGELES—The Nissan Open has a new look.

Riviera Country Club has been restored to its original design, with a split fairway on No. 8 and three other holes that have added distance to bring bunkers and other trouble into play.

Sunshine is in the forecast–shadows are a rarity at Riviera this time of the year.

And Tiger Woods is nowhere to be found.

Woods, who played the Nissan Open as a 16-year-old, decided to skip the tournament for the first time since he turned pro so he could return to Florida and try to shake off remnants of a virus that has pestered him the past two weeks.

"If Tiger were here, it would be the spice in the soup," Sergio Garcia said Wednesday.

The soup at the Nissan Open at least gets the "Spice Boys," the nickname for European stars Lee Westwood and Darren Clarke, who lead a small contingent of international stars making their American debut in advance of next week's Match Play Championship.

The Nissan Open also marks the return of David Duval, who broke up with his fiancee and missed the last three weeks.

He worked hard on his game in Florida until the weather in Ponte Vedra Beach got chilly, then decided to go where he could take advantage of cold weather–Sun Valley, for five days of snowboarding.

Just don't look for him on a halfpipe.

"No way," said Duval, who watched on TV as Kelly Clark won the first US gold medal in the Olympics and then Ross Powers led a US sweep in the men's halfpipe. "Those are some awesome athletes to do that stuff with a stick attached to your feet." *AP*

CHAMPIONS IN GERMANY

The Bones & Bears, champions of the first FCC Seniors Basketball Championship in Germany, pose for posterity. Kneeling (from left to right) are Eric Rubas, (mythical five) Flor Redado (muse), Toss Libunao and Joselito Jimeno (captain ball). Standing (from left to right) are Ronnie Villanueva, Bayani Villanueva, Boy Alfonso, Teddy Malaca, Molly Morales, June Reyes, Sophie Confiado, Boyet Libunao (mythical five), Manny Comia and player-coach Jose Alberto Zalde. The tournament was to foster camaraderie between the embassy staff and the Filipino community in Germany.

WINTER OLYMPICS

US entries boost medal haul

SALT LAKE CITY —If you ever had any doubts about home advantage, just take a look at the medal standings six days into the Winter Olympics.

Boosted by a patriotic crowd, the United States already has 10 medals with most of the competition over Wednesday, compared with 13 medals overall in Nagano four years ago. The Americans dreamt about 20 ahead of the games and the way they're performing, who knows?

Team U.S.A. is mixing it with the traditional winter powers and was leading the medal standings almost a third of the way through the games until a sweep in the women's luge late Wednesday pushed Germany's total to 12 medals.

Austria, with one gold, one silver and seven bronze, is third in overall medals with nine and Norway has eight. Although the Norwegians lead the gold medal standings with five.

The Canadians, having set themselves the ambitious target of finishing in the top three, were lagging in 12th with only a silver and a bronze.

The Americans have been winning medals in the most unexpected of places and circumstances.

On Wednesday, it was Bode Miller's turn to pull off a spectacular comeback and grab a medal. Barely keeping upright in the downhill section of the Alpine combined, he was in 15th place going into the slalom. But two spectacular slalom runs later, including the only sub-50 second race, he'd come up with a silver.

"To do that in front of my home crowd was awesome," said Miller. *AP*

Tyson-Lewis bout still no go in Georgia

ATLANTA—Already shunned by Nevada and other states, Mike Tyson faces opposition in Georgia as he searches for a site to fight heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis. Tyson was granted a boxing license last week by the Georgia Boxing Commission, but the commission said the state also requires a promoter's license and a show permit, neither of which Tyson's camp has applied for. *AP*

SPORTS

Editor **Al S. Mendoza** ◎ *Assistant Editor* **Edwin M. Villanueva**

SPORTS ON TV Compiled by Lorenzo Manguiat

POOL: Rack 'Em Up—Francisco Bustamante vs Ralf Souquet at 7 p.m. on ESPN
World Pool League 2001 at 7:30 p.m. on Star Sports
BASKETBALL: NBA Action at 8:30 a.m. (r–8:30 p.m.) on ESPN
NBA - Utah Jazz vs Philadelphia 76ers at 9 a.m. (r–9 p.m.) on ESPN

PBA SAMSUNG CUP

Selecta-RP Team spanks San Mig

By June Navarro

GAME TODAY (Malolos, Bulacan):
5:30 p.m.—Alaska vs Barangay Ginebra

SELECTA-RP Team overcame a shaky debut to beat San Miguel Beer, 64-59, last night in the PBA Samsung Governors Cup at the Makati Coliseum.

Dennis Espino and Dondon Hontiveros played heroes as the nationals outsteadied the Beermen in the last two minutes to notch the victory.

Espino drilled a 16-foot jumper from the left flank, while Hontiveros canned a triple in the dying seconds.

One of Sta. Lucia Realty's pillars, Espino topped Selecta with 12 points on top of seven rebounds and two assists.

"It's a nice thing to win but winning for the national team is only secondary because our priority is to learn and accomplish something," said Selecta-RP Team coach Jong Uichico.

Although the nationals gladly took the victory, Uichico lamented that they tend to fall back into their old habits of posting up in a bid to score easy points.

"We should eliminate those PBA attitudes and apply the fundamentals of amateur basketball to the hilt," said Uichico.

The nationals posted their biggest margin, 55-47, courtesy of Chris Jackson's triple at the top of the key but Keith Hill and Lamont Strothers easily erased the deficit by teaming up in the final three minutes.

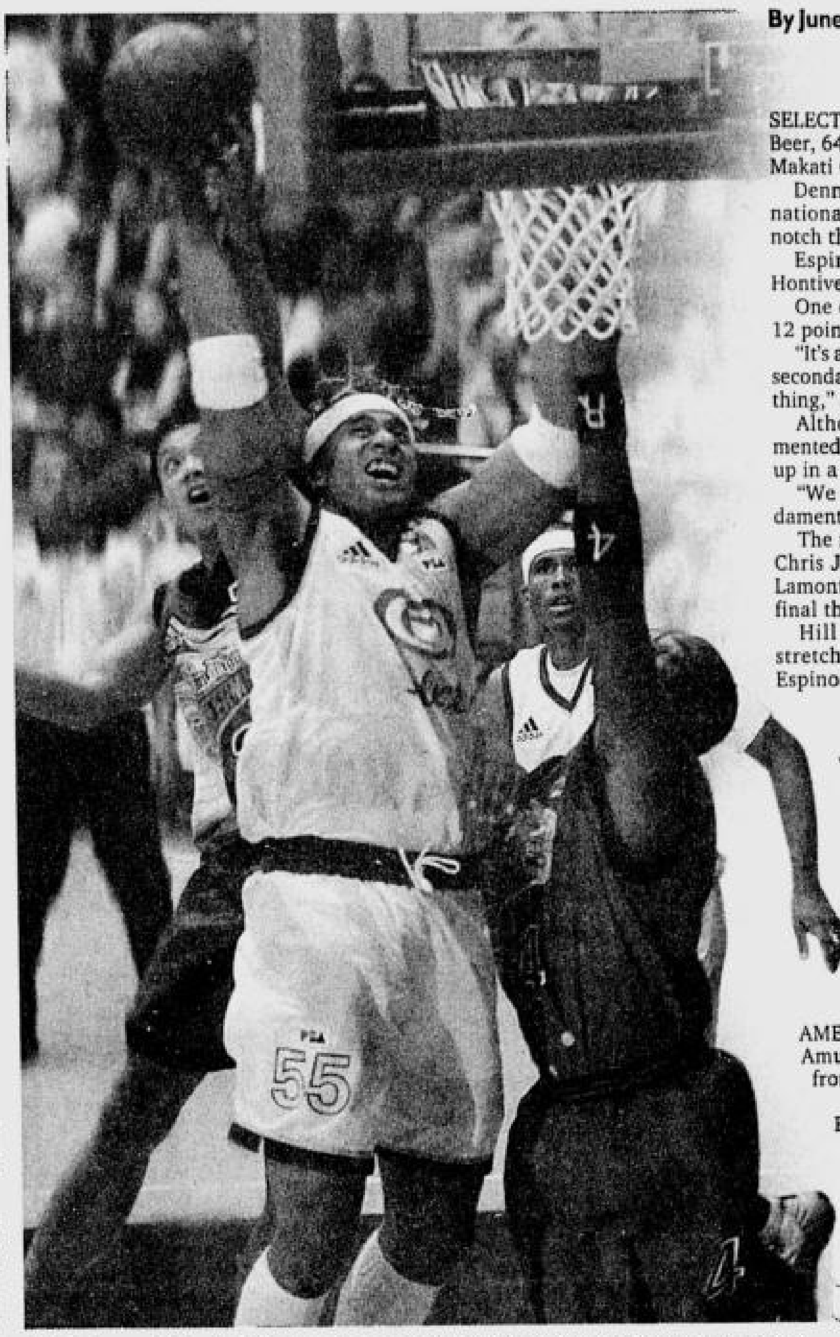
Hill and Strothers, who combined for 10 points in that stretch, trimmed the gap, 57-58, with 1.34 remaining before Espino and Hontiveros took matters for the nationals.

Scores:

SELECTA-RP 64—Espino 12, Hontiveros 11, Racela 9, Juinio 8, Taulava 7, Fran 6, Calaguio 6, Jackson 3, Reavis 2.

SAN MIGUEL 59—Strothers 28, Hill 16, Belasco 6, Victoria 5, Pena 4, Lago 0, Mente 0, Duat 0.

Quarters: 11-9, 29-26, 46-41, 64-59.



ASI Taulava of Selecta (55) struggles against the tight defense of San Miguel's Robert Duat (left) and Dorian Peña.

ERNIE SARMIENTO

Bayno secures GAB license

AMERICAN coach Bill Bayno yesterday secured a Games and Amusement Board license despite a heated wave of protest from the Basketball Coaches Association of the Philippines.

A Talk N Text source also told the INQUIRER the 40-year-old Bayno is set to obtain his work permit today from the Department of Labor in time for the Phone Pals' debut in the PBA Samsung Governors Cup against the Purefoods Hotdogs tomorrow.

The source said Bayno got the GAB license even without the presence of Dole work permit, defying the standard procedures on aliens wanting to land a job in the country.

A PBA official, who also requested anonymity, said the ordinary course of action would be to obtain the Dole work permit first before securing the GAB license.

June Navarro

Dubai dangles 1-kg gold to Filipino cue artists

EFREN "Bata" Reyes, Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Leonardo "Dodong" Andam departed for Dubai, UAE, yesterday for the First Fujairah International Billiard Tournament on Feb. 16-20.

However, Reyes will not join the 9-ball meet as a competitor but as a special guest.

It will be Bustamante and Andam who will compete with top players from other countries and vie for the unique prizes of 1-kilogram of gold for the winner, ½ kilogram of gold for 2nd place, ¼ kilogram of gold each for 3rd and 4th places. The 5th to 8th placers will receive cash prizes.

The invitation to Reyes, Bustamante and Andam to grace the occasion with their presence showed the United Arab Emirates "high esteem for our players and our country," Puyat Sports President Aristeo "Putch" Puyat said.

Reyes will merely play exhibition matches with the champion and runner-ups of the local tournament and entertain the audience with trick shots. Bustamante and Andam will be among 16 players from several countries invited to the International Tournament.

The three Puyat Sports players were accompanied by Rolando Vicente, Reyes' manager.

Blu, Montaña play in Cebu cagefest

GAMES TODAY:
5:30 p.m.—Hapee vs Montaña
7:30 p.m.—Granny Goose Tortillos vs Blu

BLU Detergent and Montaña Pawnshop start their title quest today in the Cebu Basketball Federation-Philippine Basketball League Partnership Cup at the Cebu Coliseum.

Blu collides with Granny Goose in the main encounter at 7:30 p.m. while Montaña clashes with Hapee Toothpaste-Cebu in the curtain raiser at 5:30 p.m.

A short, simple ceremony and the traditional parade of teams will kick off the event held in cooperation with the Cebu Basketball Federation headed by president Jack Huang.

Pasig Run underway

THE 2ND Pasig River Heritage Marathon—the Philippine's answer to the Boston, New York and Berlin marathons—held its advocacy run recently to create greater awareness for the Feb. 24 event from Intramuros to the Global City in Taguig.

The PRHM is a 42-K run which will provide participants and observers the unique experience of crossing 11 bridges that span the Pasig and going through cities to reach its ultimate destination.

The marathon is both a running activity and an awareness campaign for the rehabilitation of the Pasig River.

Fr. Robert Reyes led runners and would-be participants in the Advocacy Run.

The PRHM project is being undertaken by the Clean and Green Foundation, Inc. in association with the Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. and the Philippine Track and field Association.

Major sponsors are Phil. Daily Inquirer, GMA-7, Asia Brewery, Unilever, Jollibee and 3M Filtrete.

New gadget hits town

A NEW sports equipment used by superstars like NBA's Shaquille O'Neal, Super Bowl's Julie Foudy of the New England Patriots and Julie Foudy of the US National Soccer Team is in town.

Reebok Core Training prepares bodies for optimal health and performance. The first-ever exercise board tilts, twists, torques and recoils with the body movements.

Its instability forces the user to adjust, hold a position and balance, providing a workout unlike any other gadget like wobble boards, stability balls, trampolines or conventional exercise machines such as stationary bikes, stair climbers, and treadmills.

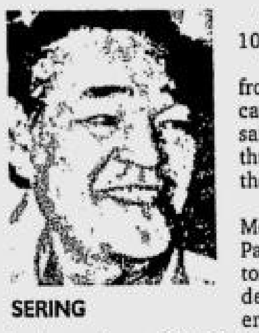
The new equipment allows both professional athletes and health buffs to condition their bodies. It helps muscles increase power, build strength, decrease risk of injury and increase cardiovascular and athletic training.

It is available at all Royal Sporting House outlets at Glorietta 4, Robinson's Ermita, Festival Mall, Isetann-Recto, Ayala in Cebu, The Shoe Shop at Rockwell and Shangri-La Plaza, and other sports stores. Call Ayet T. Sinchongco at 776-9725 for other details.

MR. STATESMAN

Sering falls from wheelchair, dies

By Marc Anthony Reyes



SERING

PHILIPPINE sports, reeling over seemingly endless bickerings among sports leaders, suffered yet another big blow yesterday when Gov. Jose Sering died after taking a fall while having breakfast in his home in Sucat, Parañaque.

He was 76.

The two-time Philippine Olympic Committee president and founder of the Asian Amateur Athletics Association fell from his wheelchair about 9:30 a.m. while trying to reach something.

Sering has been wheelchair-bound for years after he got amputated due to diabetes.

He was taken to hospital after the accident, but doctors failed to revive him.

Upon reaching the hospital, all his vital organs have stopped functioning, said Lucille, Sering's 31-year-old lawyer-daughter.

Sering was declared dead at 10:30 a.m.

"We still don't know if he died from the fall or he had a stroke, because he didn't make any noise," said Lucille. "We just heard a loud thud and next saw him sprawled on the floor."

His body lies at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapel along Sucat Road, Parañaque. His body will be brought tomorrow to Surigao City in Surigao del Norte where he served as governor from 1965 to 1985.

Despite his semi-retirement from sports in 1991, Sering remained in touch with athletics, serving as chair of the Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association, where he was the president from 1969 to 1981 and again from 1985 to 1991.

POC president Celso Dayrit said Philippine sports "has lost a great man and a respected leader."

During Sering's two terms as POC chief, Dayrit served under him.

"He has a lot of contribution to the Olympic movement and he was my mentor," said Dayrit. Strangely, Sering was also the mentor of Patafa president Go Teng Kok, Dayrit's chief rival.

"This is a very sad day for Philippine sports," said Go. "Up to his very last days, he was thinking of how to help Philippine sports. He was the statesman of Philippine sports."

Go said he saw Sering on Tuesday at Century Park Hotel. The Patafa head said Sering asked the waiter to put his bill into Go's account.

"It was the first time he did that," said Go. "It was as if he was trying to make 'lambing' to me."

Hotel waiters said Sering ordered a potato salad. He ate alone on a corner table.

Sering is survived by his wife, Socorro Limpot Sering, and nine children.

He was the founding president of the AAAA in 1973 before becoming POC president from 1985 to 1992. He was also the executive director of Gintong Alay in 1984.

Gob Sering

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

IN HIS heyday, Gob Sering was a man of power, whether or not he was in his native Surigao. In all of Asia, he was a lion of influence; his name commanded respect, if not fear. Yet, he was the humblest of all. His humility would melt you like heat is to ice cream. He had a marshmallow for a heart that you'd feel guilty at the end of the day if you asked him even the littlest of favors. In the infancy of my sportswriting life, Gob Sering was both a teacher and a father.

He tossed in the ropes when danger lurked; he knew it when it was coming.

He built bridges when gaps widened between feuding friends.

He gave reason when emotions started to wreck logic.

He treated everybody equally, fairly. The young and old, the newcomers and veterans, they were all the same to him: human beings.

He had a wit that is now sorely lacking in many of our sports leaders. His common sense was beyond compare.

Gob Sering, dead at 76 yesterday, keyed Lydia de Vega's ascension as Asia's sprints queen in the '80s. I consider him Diay's discoverer, nurturer, chief patron. To the man, there is no act more noble than giving one's self to the service of humanity. To the man, all athletes are winners.

"I don't care whether you win medals or not," he would tell his wards repeatedly when he was president of the Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association. "The important thing is, you give your best always when called upon to serve flag and country."

The last time I saw Gob Sering, I almost cried. He came to the office and when I came down to meet him at the lobby, he was in a wheelchair. A leg had succumbed to diabetes.

"I am now busy writing a book," he said. "I'll be eternally grateful if you could read the manuscripts."

I never got hold of the manuscripts. I don't know if he'd finished his book.

Gob Sering loved to act out the role of the last man standing. Once, a typhoon had us marooned in Cagayan de Oro City. Our flight to Manila got cancelled. Winds howling, shaking the foundations of Pryce Hotel, he kept us company that evening, hitting the sack only when everybody was down on all fours—literally.

He did things differently: He sipped his cognac from a brandy glass filled with ice.

Gob Sering belonged to an endangered specie: He was the last of sports' real gentlemen.

He'll be missed.

Gymnastics biggest 'earner' in 2001

SEVEN national sports associations that failed to shine brightly in the last Southeast Asian Games got the biggest financial support from the Philippine Sports Commission in 2001, confidential PSC documents showed.

The biggest surprise came from the gymnastics association, which got P9,635,175.40—the most by any NSA. It won two silver and four bronze medals in the last SEAG.

Cycling, swimming and football also earned substantial subsidies. Cycling won three silvers and four bronzes, football was medalless and swimming had a 0-7-6, gold-silver-bronze medal tally.

Cycling got P7,477,599.29, swimming P7,269,306.33 and football P6.889,956.05.

The PSC gave fencing P9,287,809.87 for its 45 athletes and coaches, P9,232.424.27 to shooting and P6,922,207.05 to archery.

Newly installed PSC chair Eric Buhain is now in the process of scrutinizing NSA budgets for the year in the run-up to the Asian Games.

Marc Anthony Reyes

Xavier School routs UNO High, wins crown

XAVIER School's Stallions rolled out like a big ball of fire and torched UNO High, 91-61, to retain the Tiong Lian basketball title via a nine-game sweep Wednesday night at the UNO gym.

Leonard Lee fired 19 points while Chris Tiu, Tyrone Tang and JC Yu chipped in 18, 15 and 11, respectively, as the Stallions wrapped up their fifth crown this year and their 15th since May 1999 when Alfredo "Moe" Amador assumed the coaching job.

These four got tremendous support from Sammy Young, Joseph Chua, Marty Tio, Bon Syiaco, Edmund Yee, Luke Orbos, Wesley Cobankiat, Randy Chua, Julius Hon and Francis Ang as Amador freely shuffled his boys.

"They deserved to win. They worked hard to prove to our fans, especially Fr. Johnny Go (Xavier School director), that they're the best in their class," said Amador of his boys.

After they stretched their 28-16 first-quarter lead to 48-25 at halftime, the Stallions turned what was expected to be a thriller into a farcical match.

The scores:

Xavier (91)—Lee 19, Tiu 18, Tang 15, Yu 11, Young 7, Yee 4, Syiaco 3, J. Chua 3, Tio 2, Orbos 2, Cobankiat 2, R. Chua 0, Hon 0

UNO (61)—Syki 14, Tiu 11, Chong 9, Concepcion 8, So 5, Ng 3, Sze 2, Yee 2, N. Ng 2

Halftime: 48-25.

XAVIER School skipper Tyrone Tang receiving the trophy from league official Co Bin.

Globe
HANDYPHONE

"I can't believe it! Totoo pala 'to!"

- Andrea Abantao
San Pablo City
₱100,000 winner
February 9, 2002

- Chakiris De Guzman
Quezon City
Nokia 8850 winner
February 6, 2002

"Dalawang beses na'kong nananalo!"

- Bernard Cuyco
Baliwag, Bulacan
₱10,000 winner
January 16 & 18, 2002

- Jeorge Castro
Navotas
₱10,000 winner
January 22 & 27, 2002

- Roel Panlilio
Angeles City
Nokia 9210 & 8250 winner
February 5 & 9, 2002

"It's a blessing!"

- May Vergara
Cainta, Rizal
₱100,000 winner
February 5, 2002

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11:00AM	RACMA MANGELEN Maguindanao ₱50,000	ROEL PANLILIO Angeles City Nokia 9210	RODNEY BUGTONG Cavite ₱50,000	RODEL REYES Sta. Ana, Manila ₱10,000	CRISTETA OBLENIDA Laguna Nokia 6210	REYNALDO PALENCIA Guiguinto, Bulacan Nokia 6210	IRENE TABIN Pangasinan Nokia 6210
12:00NN	GEMMA GAPUSAN Pangasinan Nokia 6210	REYNALDO TENG Cebu City ₱10,000	NELSON VIDAL Mandaluyong City ₱10,000	KENNETH TANEO Pasig City Nokia 6210	REY PARAGUAS Tagum City ₱10,000	ANDREA ABANTAO San Pablo City ₱100,000	JOSE JAVIER Bulacan ₱10,000
1:00PM	FRANCIA FORTEO Mandaluyong City ₱10,000	MAY VERGARA Cainta Rizal ₱100,000	CHAKIRIS DE GUZMAN Quezon City Nokia 8850	JELGEN ANDRADA Negros Oriental Nokia 8850	PATRICK JALASCO Mandaluyong City Nokia 6210	CRISELDA BENEMERITO Binangonan, Rizal ₱10,000	JEROME AREOLA Cagayan De Oro City Nokia 8310
2:00PM	JENELYN CHAN Vigan City Nokia 8850	ELVIRA ANGANA Mandaue City, Cebu Nokia 8850	KATHERINE PALADO Davao City Nokia 6210	ADELINA KALAW Meycauayan, Bulacan ₱10,000	MICHELE LABATOS Sultan Kudarat ₱20,000	ROEL PANLILIO Angeles City Nokia 8250	EDGAR YBAÑEZ Negros Oriental ₱10,000
3:00PM	TERESA MARQUESES Calamba, Laguna Nokia 8310	LYNETTE TIONGSON Quezon City Nokia 6210	MARLON NOVERA Tondo, Manila ₱20,000	HEIDY LIM Quezon City ₱20,000	HAZEL MENDOZA Cagayan De Oro City ₱20,000	RAFAELITO GAYARES Bacolod City ₱10,000	STEPHANIE UY Tacloban City Nokia 6210
4:00PM	MARCIUS BELEN Victoria, Tarlac Nokia 6210	DHIANA TEJANO Cagayan ₱10,000	LORENZO PARAN Quezon City Nokia 6210	ISRAEL CASTILLO Bulacan Nokia 8310	JOSEFINA ANTONIO Pasig City Nokia 8310	MICHAEL QUIMOD Cebu City Nokia 6210	VICENTE TIGAS JR. Makati City Nokia 8250

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METRO

Editor **Louie C. Camino**

Recah Trinidad's "Bare Eye" column will return on Monday, Feb. 18.

Cops' statement not WPD policy, says director

By Philip Tubeza

STATEMENTS coming from the Manila's Finest Brotherhood Association Inc. (MBFAI) are not the governing policy in the Western Police District, according to WPD Director Supt. Nicolas Pasinos Jr.

Pasinos yesterday stepped in the brewing controversy among his men about the arbitrary transfers of their colleagues, saying the organization of WPD's non-commissioned officers is "outside the chain of command."

"I am still the district director," Pasinos stressed. "The Manila's Finest statements cannot be construed as the (governing) policy in the WPD."

The MFBAI has been protesting what it described as the arbitrary reassignment of members to the provinces. Last week, its vice president SPO1 Antonio V. Emmanuel was transferred to Makati.

Pasinos said he appreciates the Brotherhood's concern for the welfare of its members, but it's the WPD leadership that still sets policy for the policemen in the district.

"We also believe in the right of policemen to due process," Pasinos said.

But he said he will wait for the directive from his directors regarding the National Police Commission's order to stop the transfers and return those who were transferred to their mother units.

7 tourists robbed in 1 month

THE ORDER for the Philippine National Police to field more policemen in tourist areas in the National Capital Region, came too late for a Briton and an Indian who were hit by thieves yesterday in Manila.

Department of Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon yesterday said he received the assurance of National Capital Regional Police Office Director Edgar Aglipay on the transfer of more men to critical areas in Metro Manila during a meeting on Feb. 7.

Gordon and Aglipay also met with airport and tourism industry officials to discuss concerns related to the government's anti-crime drive, including the lighting of roads around the airport and other major tourist areas.

The NCRPO chief vowed to round up members of the so-called Ativan Gang, swindlers, robbers and thieves who prey on tourists in Malate, Ermita and Intramuros in Manila, Makati City and Pasay City.

Briton Brian Robertson, 50, currently staying at the Malate Pension on Adriatico Street, Malate, and Indian David Larendral Lal, 46, who is staying at the Rosas Garden Hotel on M.H. Del Pilar, are the sixth and seventh tourists to be hit by thieves this month.

Robertson lost his blue wallet with P15,000 inside a Light Rail Transit carriage bound for Gil Puyat Ave. about 2 p.m. Tuesday, while Lal lost his P6,000 cellular phone and his black wallet with $1,000 (or P51,000) while he was on a passenger jeepney bound for Chinatown about 10:30 a.m. Wednesday.

The upsurge in petty crimes has also led the Western Police District to set up a special crime unit that will hasten the investigation of cases involving foreigners. The unit will be under the WPD's General Assignment Section.

P. Tubeza, J. Aning

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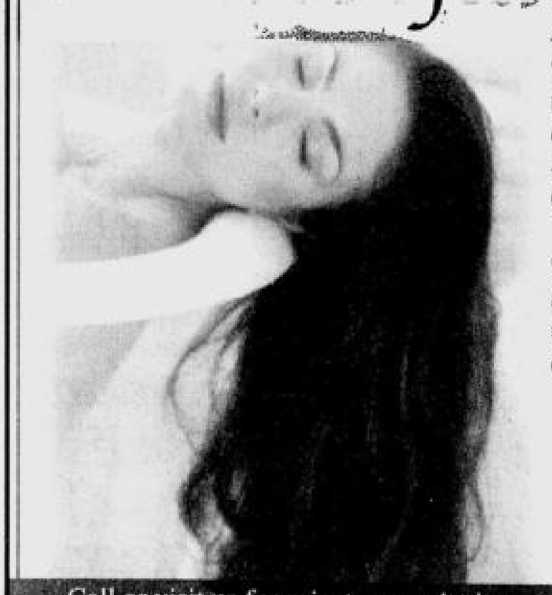

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1 RIDING IN CARS
2 BLACK HAWK DOWN
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4 IKAW LAMANG . . .
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10 FROM HELL
11 ISANG PANAGINIP
12 OCEAN'S ELEVEN

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2 VANILLA SKY
3 COLLATERAL DAMAGE
4 IKAW LAMANG . . .
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1 COLLATERAL DAMAGE
2 BLACK HAWK DOWN
3 VANILLA SKY
4 ISANG PANAGINIP
5 LORD OF THE RINGS
6 FINAL ANSWER
7 IKAW LAMANG . . .
8 COLLATERAL DAMAGE

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1 FINAL ANSWER
2 CLOSED
3 COLLATERAL DAMAGE
4 LORD OF THE RINGS
5 VANILLA SKY
6 MAY PAG IBIG PA KAYA
7 CLOSED
8 BLACK HAWK DOWN

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1 COLLATERAL DAMAGE
2 BLACK HAWK DOWN
3 VANILLA SKY
4 ISANG PANAGINIP
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2 COLLATERAL DAMAGE
3 IKAW LAMANG . . .

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1 COLLATERAL DAMAGE
2 ISANG PANAGINIP
3 IKAW LAMANG . . .
4 IKAW LAMANG . . .

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1 BLACK HAWK DOWN
2 MAY PAG IBIG PA KAYA
3 VANILLA SKY
4 LORD OF THE RINGS
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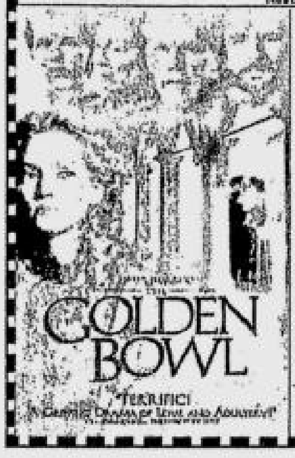

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4 HEARTS IN ATLANTIC

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3 IKAW LAMANG . . .
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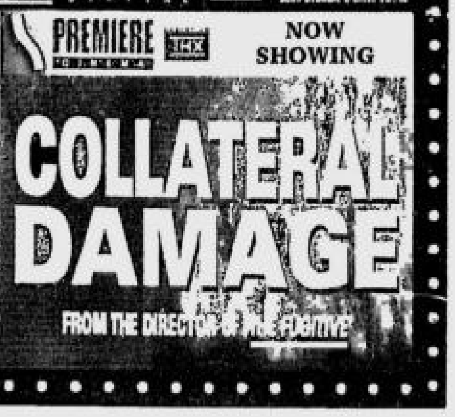

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Crazy things stars do for love

WHETHER your heart likes it or not, you find yourself getting sucked into the Feb. 14 frenzy. Is it going to be a red-hot or a red-alert day for you?

The Valentine concerts and gimmicks are a given in this Valentine-crazy country. But what about love?

DOLLYWOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

With show biz marriages breaking up one after another, do stars still recognize what love really is? For all the money they earn and all the fame they gain, stars still yearn for love. Love that will outlast all the adulation and accolades they will ever have.

Martin Nievera: "After surviving and causing storms of my own, I can say with confidence and passion that love means to me today what it has always meant in days gone by. I still believe you have to be willing to get hurt if it's really love you seek. Love out of spite or selfishness can still be called love, but unless you can give it to someone, love remains just that, a word. The magic and fireworks that love brings can only appear when accepted the way they are given. Then, even with your eyes closed, you can see the fireworks that only love can ignite. Love is a leap of faith worth taking.

"The craziest thing I did for love? Love makes you deaf, blind and dumb. Borderline stupid! But of all the crazy things I have done, minus the spontaneity and stolen kisses in the dark, was losing a family, breaking a promise, changing the course to forever. Now tell me that's not crazy."

Christine Bersola: "My concept of love has changed through the years. I look at love now from a mature perspective. Love is not just all about romance and passion but also a sharing of a unified goal and vision. A meeting of the minds and principles and the unwavering desire to spend your life with that one person."

Diether Ocampo: "Love is learning to accept what you have and to be happy whatever it brings."

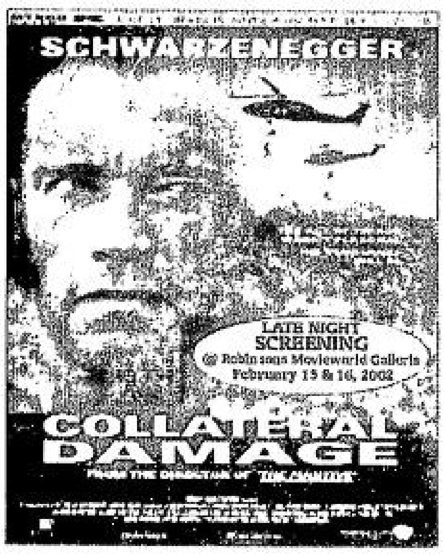
Janice de Belen: "Love will never change. It will forever be the same. Something that makes us crazy.

What changes is the extent of that craziness. The craziest thing I've done because of love? Well . . . obvious *ba*? Nothing more than what everybody knows already."

Albert Martinez: "Flowers and chocolates don't work anymore. You have to be creative. Love is knowing you have someone when you're down, who's happy when you're up and beside you when you're sick. One of the many crazy things I've done in the name of love is to work as a baker when Liezl and I were still in the States—even if I was allergic to flour. I almost died because of a severe asthma attack!"

Liezl Martinez: "Love is turning your back on everything and everyone else just to fight for someone. That's exactly what Albert and I did when we eloped."

CRAZY/ A30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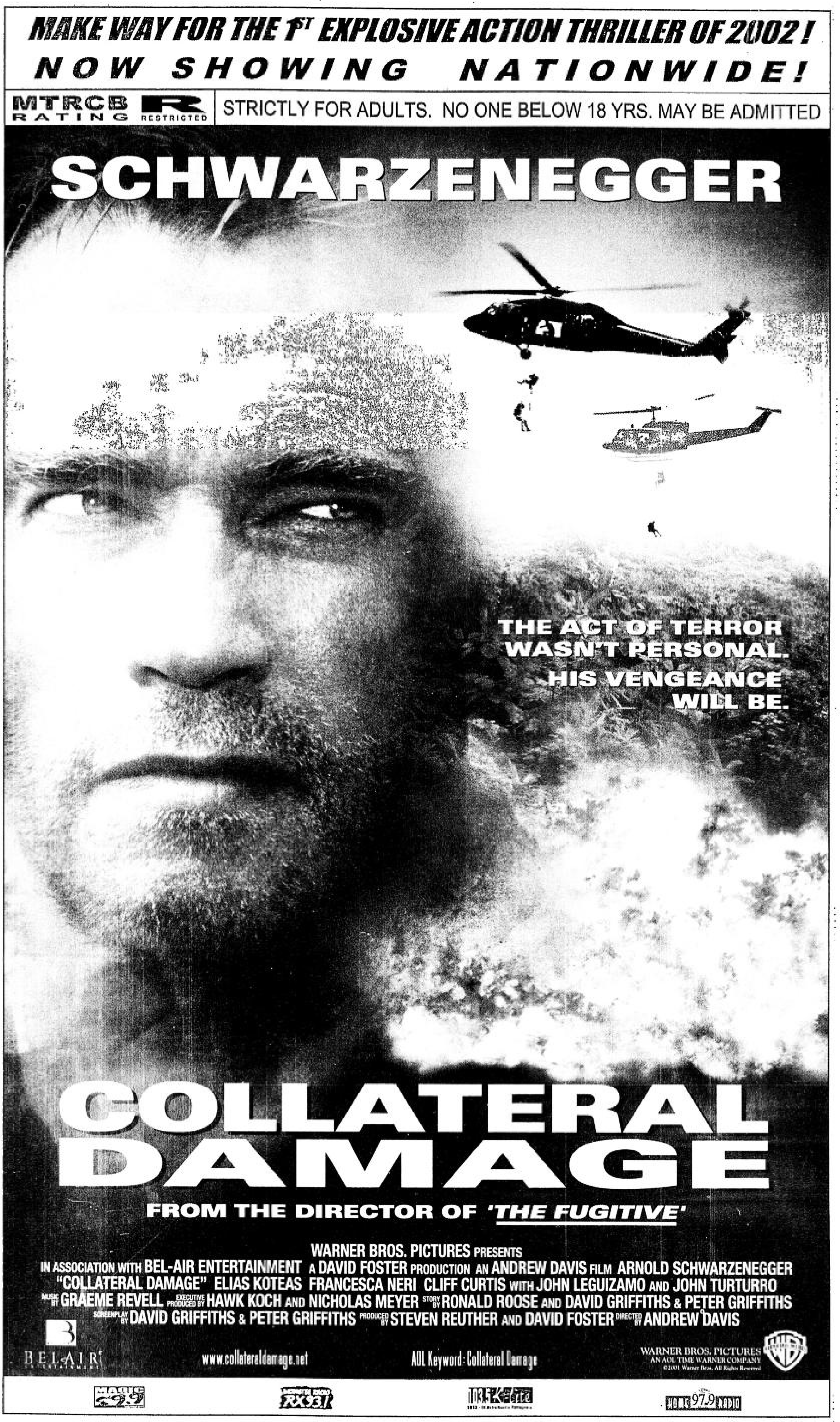
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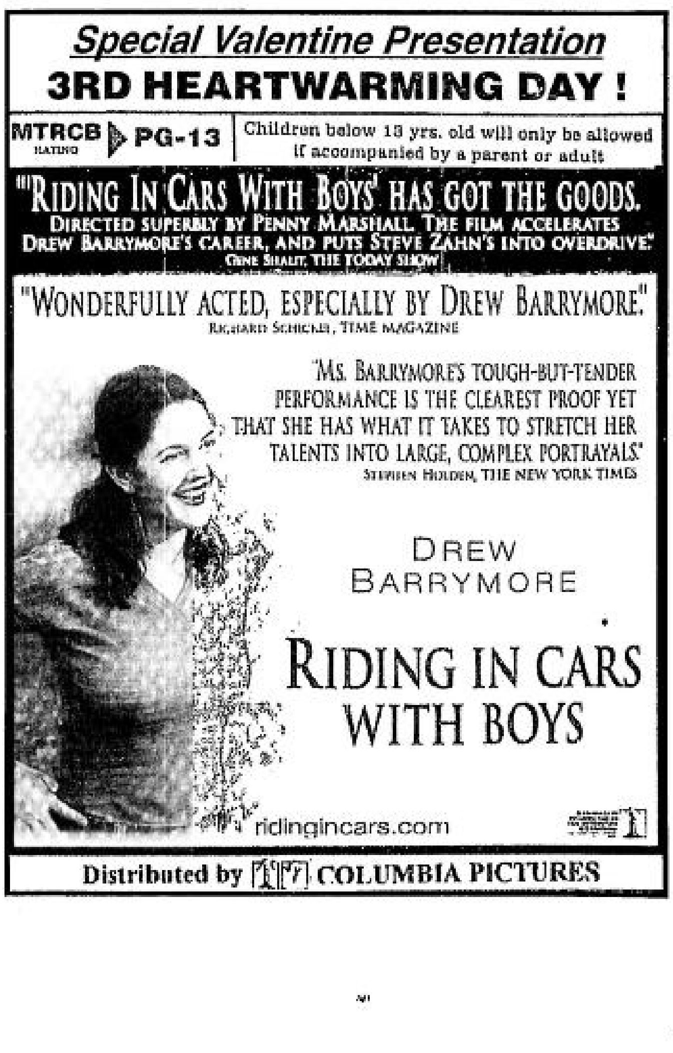
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"WONDERFULLY ACTED, ESPECIALLY BY DREW BARRYMORE." RICHARD SCHICKEL, TIME MAGAZINE
"MS. BARRYMORE'S TOUGH-BUT-TENDER PERFORMANCE IS THE CLEAREST PROOF YET THAT SHE HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO STRETCH HER TALENTS INTO LARGE, COMPLEX PORTRAYALS." STEPHEN HOLDEN, THE NEW YORK TIMES
DREW BARRYMORE
RIDING IN CARS WITH BOYS
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'Illusione' is 'theater in its purest sense'

By Alex Y. Vergara

TO ITS once-active and now-aging habitues, Coco Banana is just a memory. But the art form the venue has spawned is alive and well among Metro Manila's current crop of gay impersonators.

From cramped lounges, impersonation will be going bigtime as "Illusione," a grand musical revue featuring some of the biggest names in live theater, debuts at Onstage in Greenbelt on Feb. 22.

Directed by Fritz Ynfante and choreographed by Douglas Nierras, the show is produced by Bahaghari Productions, led by former Miss Universe Margie Moran, the same outfit behind the critically acclaimed film "Bagong Buwan."

Twenty-eight male performers will essay such divas as Diana Ross, Whitney Houston, Mariah Carey, Cher, Madonna and Sharon Cuneta.

To complete the look, Eric Pineda has designed several costumes inspired by original outfits worn by the divas onstage.

James Cooper lends his expertise as the show's resident image consultant. But the former US-based stylist has been prevailed upon by the group to give the stage one more try. Unknown to many, Cooper used to be part of a traveling group of impersonators who shared the stage with the real Cher. His divas of choice?Diana Ross and Shirley Bassey.

"I want to feel it one more time," he said. "But I'm not as slim as I used to be, so I've been trying my best to loose weight."

No amount of dieting and exercise, however, can make him fit into his old Bob Mackie gown, a beaded, dolman-sleeved creation Cooper used to wear as Ross. Pineda came to the rescue by recreating the gown with Cooper's new measurements taken into consideration.

But why produce such a show right after doing a social drama?

"We've been doing 'Illusione' as we were wrapping up work for 'Bagong Buwan,'" said Moran, who collaborates anew with partners Niña Romualdez and Carmita Francisco. "The film had a specific agenda because of my work on the ground. 'Illusione' is the other side of me. After all, I was once active in theater even before I became Miss Universe."

The show will also feature excerpts from such musicals as "Gypsy," "Sunset Boulevard" and, believe it or not, the classic ballet "Swan Lake."

Designer Ernest Santiago, one of the originators of Coco Banana, will also stage a comeback by doing his rendition of Norma Desmond, complete with the trademark turban and flowing caftan he himself designed.

The performers' resemblance to actual celebrities counted a lot, but Ynfante put more weight on their talent to impersonate and, yes, create an illusion onstage.

To make the cut, performers underwent a series of auditions under Ynfante's watchful eyes. They're also undergoing dance classes under Nierras.

"And not all of them are gays," said the seasoned director. "Four of them are real men—well, at least, for now."

People who've worked before with Ynfante know how exacting he is as a director. Each has had to overcome several challenges to meet his requirements.

"I've worked with Fritz before and he has a fantastic sense of humor," said Moran. "I needed someone like him who could bring out the concept. He's funny yet disciplined. At the same time he's also *bading* (gay)."

Moran and Ynfante go back a long way. He used to direct the budding beauty in a number of stage productions back in the early '70s.

Cooper is another friend from way back. In fact, both met in New York where Moran was based during her reign as Miss Universe in 1973.

"I happened to watch one of their shows," recalled Moran, "when a gay dressed as Shirley Bassey approached me and said that he's Pinoy, too."

From then on, Cooper would do the beauty queen's face whenever she has a public engagement in the Big Apple.

Certain portions of "Illusione" may be hilarious, said Nierras, but it's not a mere occasion for gay camp.

"We can't take away the *baklaan* element, but everything else in the production is serious—from the choreography, to the costumes, down to the portrayal."

Making someone defy nature has been one of Nierras' challenges as a choreographer.

"I've been tasked to make them move in the opposite way they've been created. When push comes to shove, however, you can't stop people from moving like themselves."

Cooper certainly knows what Nierras is talking about. "Impersonation is an art form," he said. "It's not mere lip-synching, but theater in its purest sense. When you impersonate, you study the person, down to her breathing. I used to psyche myself to feel and think like Diana or Shirley every time I go onstage."

Such shows, of course, are also occasions of pure fantasy. Performers are expected to do their own faces under intense time pressure, so Cooper fine-tuned their hair and makeup to help them achieve the look. "I don't look like any of the women I impersonated," he said. "By studying how they moved, I was able to get away with it."

Pineda faced similar challenges as he created outfits inspired by certain characters and personalities. "Considering that they don't have breasts and hips, I had to create the illusion that these men are actually women. I had to reengineer the clothes by putting pads here and there to achieve the proportions of a woman."

Still, their biggest challenge has yet to come.

"Working with Fritz has always been an exhilarating experience," Pineda added, "but I'm not worried about the show. I'm nervous just thinking of all the gays in the Philippines who will come and see it. Nothing will be spared."

Only an illusionist will know the handy work of another.

Call 435-1108/1120 for more information.

MARGIE Moran, the real thing

FRITZ Ynfante with his "Sharon Cuneta"

PHOTOS BY ROMY HOMILLADA

"WHITNEY Houston"

"MARIAH Carey"

"TINA Turner"

ERIC Pineda

DOUGLAS Nierras

JAMES Cooper

Youth Council search

DON'T miss the chance to join the most prestigious young role model search in the country, the MTV and Penshoppe Youth Council search presented by Cali.

You only have until the second week of February to send your application forms.

Twenty finalists will be chosen in a selection party on Feb. 18 and the search will culminate with the announcement of the 10 winners on March 8.

The chosen ten will then be MTV and Penshoppe's official ambassadors to schools and will be actively involved in socio-civic programs and youth-oriented and charitable activities.

For inquiries, call MTV at 848-1321 or e-mail Rod Nepomuceno at nepomucenor@.mtv.asia.com, Anne Matoto at matotop@mtv-asia.com or Charley Bautista at bautistac@mtv-asia.com.

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The Central Plaza Eastwood City Walk

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Freedom Ring Amphitheater Ticketron (Clark Expo)

Kuh alone but not lonely

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Leah Salterio

POP diva **Kuh Ledesma** has been vocal about her separation from her husband, **Louie Quirino Gonzales**. And although she's spending Valentine's Day alone, Kuh doesn't feel lonely at all.

"I'm still excited about Valentine's Day," Kuh allows. "And why should I be lonely or unhappy? I don't feel like there's anything missing in life."

For one, there's plenty of work to keep her busy. She has concerts in her calendar, which include a Valentine show with legendary French songwriter **Michel Legrand** at the PICC.

Legrand is the composer of such classics as "How Do You Keep the Music Playing," "Windmills of Your Mind," "If It Takes Forever" and the themes from "Summer of 42," "Brian's Song" and **Barbra Streisand**'s "Yentl."

After performing the hits of Legrand, Kuh will do provincial shows in Bulacan (Feb. 23) and Negros Oriental (Feb. 27).

In April, she is also set to mount a repeat of her "On Higher Ground" show at the Music Museum last December.

On the recording scene, Kuh is set to do two albums—one is a compilation of Legrand's hits and the other is an inspirational release, "Walking on Water."

Kuh is busy with her newfound ministry of sharing the gospel with friends both in and out show biz. She plans to open her Good News Café, which she put up as replacement for Republic of Malate, which burned down last December.

Kuh opened Good News Café to absorb the employees and staff of Republic of Malate whom she didn't want to be displaced, especially during the Christmas season.

As for her marriage, Kuh has unwavering faith that things will work out eventually.

"God's will is for marriages to be restored and if you study the Bible, it says that God makes everything beautiful in His time," she says. "I believe that. I believe it will happen."

Kuh quotes a verse from the Bible that is the reason for her hope. "In the Book of Hebrews, chapter 11 verse 1, it says, 'What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of thing we cannot yet see.'"

So even if Kuh cannot foresee her marriage being restored, she knows God sees it and that is what gives her peace.

Kuh's faith has become stronger in the face of everything that has happened to her, especially in the past year. Today, not even a fire, nor the (temporary) separation from her husband, can shake her.

Even if some people believed she ordered Republic of Malate to be burned down for insurance money, Kuh is not worried. She's not even bothered by people who react negatively when she talks about God, faith and salvation.

"There will always be people with negative reactions," says Kuh. "But I have to be bold about things because that is what God wants. If we let fear take over, we will be paralyzed and people might never hear about God. Even if people reject God's message, they will still hear it and a seed, no matter how small, will be planted. That was what happened to me."

Kuh first heard God's message when she was in college, but it wasn't until she became a singer that she prayed to receive Christ as her savior. It was her fellow singer, **Ray-An Fuentes**, who led her through prayer.

However, when Kuh and Louie started experiencing trouble in their marriage for the first time, it was only then that God became real to her. When their marriage hit a snag the second time, God became even more real and her faith, more personal.

Becoming a Born-Again Christian has changed Kuh's perspective on everything, especially love and marriage.

But Kuh assures that as long as you are with God, nothing will go wrong.

"Love and marriage will be the way God designed it to be, which is perfect and forever."

First major concert

THE SINGING-COMEDY group Gladys and the Boxers with K is now one of the most sought-after acts in town. Thanks to the hard work, perseverance and sheer talent of the members. After struggling to make it in mainstream entertainment in the mid-'90s, Gladys and the Boxers have now built their loyal audience who come to see them in their regular gigs.

It was comedian **Arnel Ignacio** who discovered Gladys Gueverra in a bar in Olongapo City. Arnel then brought Gladys to The Library, the sing-along joint in Malate, where owner **Andrew de Real** first gave her a break.

It was not too long after that she formed The Boxers. However, after performing with the group for five years, Gladys left them to work abroad with a band. But she must have missed The Boxers so that after barely a year in Bahrain, she returned to Manila and formed the group again.

"The group has become part of my life," Gladys attests. "Even if we don't have work, we go out together to sing-along bars or we watch a movie or go swimming."

Kakai Brosas became a reliever when Gladys was once hospitalized. But even after Gladys started performing again, they decided to take Kakai as a regular member of the group, hence the "K."

Gladys and the Boxers with K performs regularly at Kampo West (Wednesdays and Saturdays), Soundstage in Cainta (Tuesdays) and Music Warehouse in Legarda.

Apart from performing with the group, members of Gladys and the Boxers with K are busy with their respective jobs.

Gladys is a mainstay of "Eat Bulaga" and "Biglang Sibol." Kakai, the "K," is a regular talent of "Ikaw Lang ang Mamahalin," where she plays the *mayordoma* of **Albert Martinez**.

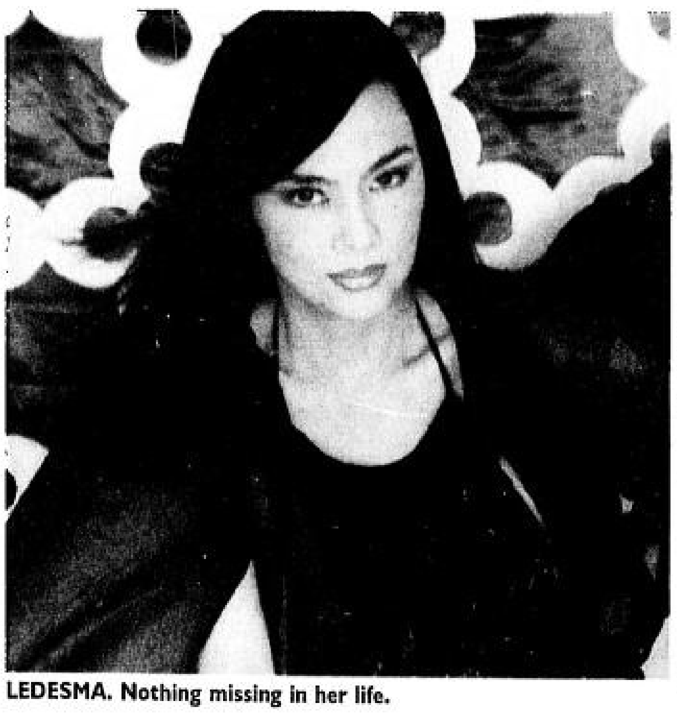
The other members are **Daniel Lardizabal** and **Cris Samonte**. They are backed up by **Sam Valdecantos** on keyboards, **Noel Pichay** on drums, **Nolit Abanilla** on bass and **Erick Larena** on guitars.

Tonight at the Music Museum, Gladys and the Boxers with K holds a major concert, "Valentine Ka Dyan."

The group will sing, dance, mimic, joke, cajole and laugh at themselves onstage in a repertoire that is a combination of songs and dances.

"We will also sing serious songs like a **Basil Valdez** medley, movie themes and a Pinoy rock medley," Gladys offers. "For a change, we want to give the audience a wacky Valentine."

"Valentine Ka Dyan" is presented by MDM Productions. Writer is **Ricky Lopez**. Director is **Andrew de Real**.



LEDESMA. Nothing missing in her life.

GLADYS and the Boxers with K: They want to give the audience a wacky Valentine.

Richard . . .

From page A32

"It is an enchanting love story which I can easily relate to," Richard said. "I am a confirmed bachelor here, unlike in the last movie I did with Sharon (Cuneta), where both of us portrayed married characters engaging in an illicit affair."

Richard describes his working relationship with Regine to be extremely pleasant and fun.

"I haven't seen any of Regine's movies, but my friends told me she is a very good actress," he said. "I have always adored her singing and every time I report for shooting, I always wonder if she will ever sing on the set.

"I understand that every movie of hers features a memorable theme song. This is one movie where I wished the shooting will not end. Everybody comes on time and is always smiling. From Day One to the last, we worked on a happy note, and this is reflected in the movie."

LEA AT CENTURY PARK

Lea Salonga poses with Century Park Hotel's public relations officer Toti Palileo during the after-show dinner of her recent Broadway concert at the PICC. The hotel was the official residence of the show. The dinner was held at the hotel's Taipan Room. It was attended by Lea, her brother Gerard who was the show's musical director, her mom Ligaya, concert director Bobby Garcia and guests Calvin Millado, Carlo Orosa and Michael de Mesa.

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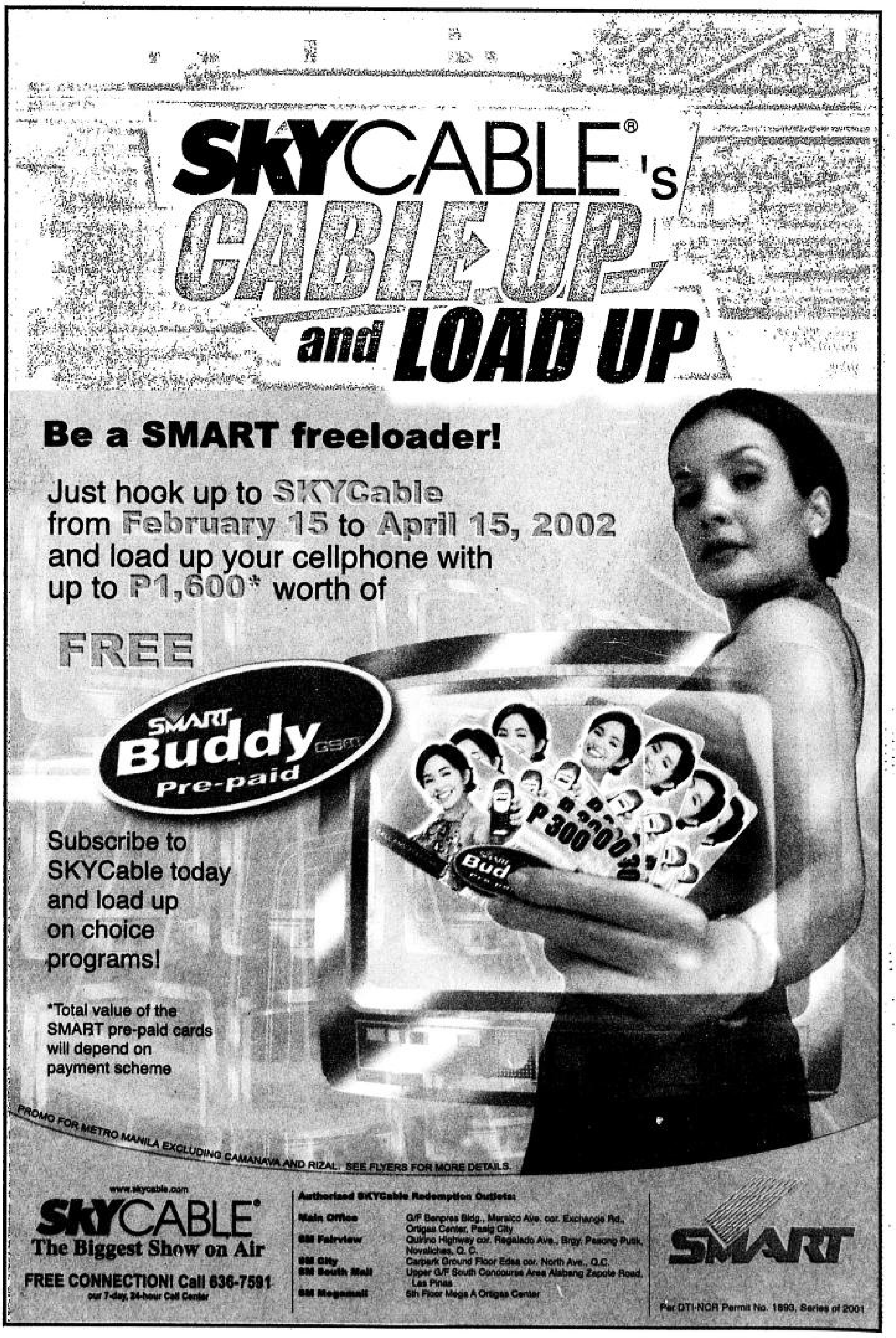

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SM South Mall Upper G/F South Concourse Area Alabang Zapote Road, Las Pinas
SM Megamall 5th Floor Mega A Ortigas Center
SMART
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1893, Series of 2001

CASANOVA TOURS SM WITH OGIE

The new boy band Casanova will be a guest in Ogie Alcasid's "A Better Man" mall tour starting today at SM Megamall. Casanova will be at SM Sucat on Feb. 22; SM North Edsa, Feb. 24; SM Manila, March 1; SM Bacoor, March 2; and SM Fairview, March 3. All shows start at 4 p.m. Tomorrow, the band will also perform in Ogie's show at the Pampanga Convention Center at 7 p.m. Casanova is composed of Marky, Ivan, John Paul and MJ.

Crazy things . . .

(From page A27)

Pinky Amador: "Love is respect and commitment. The crazy things I've done for love are far too incriminating to admit."

Aiza Seguerra: "Love has no limits, no restrictions, no expectations."

Geneva Cruz: "You know you really love someone when you've learned to accept his imperfections and have forgiven his offenses even if he does them over and over again. You forgive him because you love him.

The craziest thing love made me do? I flew 14,000 miles to where he was just to meet his family after just three months of knowing him."

Tisha Silang: "Love is a balance between heart and mind. You must grow together in all aspects.

The craziest thing I've done for love is to run away from home because my parents didn't like the guy. I even wanted to get married already. When I look back now I can't believe I ever thought of something so stupid."

Personal

MUCHISIMAS gracias to **Amar Sandtas, Orly Bien** and **Eric de la Rosa** of Mandaluyong impounding division for being such lifesavers. And to **Cathy** and **Patrick Tulfo**, thanks for turning an accident into a blessing. Just when I thought life has run out of pleasant surprises, I can't stop smiling even if I tried.

For feedback, e-mail friends_at_dsquare@yahoo.com, wateringhole2000@yahoo.com

Winston's pay-day special

SIX top bands perform Friday night, Feb. 15, in selected branches of Padi's Point as part of the ongoing Winston concert series.

The group called Asciano will be at Padi's Point Las Piñas. Divas will be at Padi's Point SM Manila and The Dawn will be at Padi's Point Biñan.

True Faith will be at Padi's Mindave.

Color It Red performs at Padi's Point Araneta Center, while Brownbeat All Stars plays at Padi's Point Metropolis in Alabang.

The Winston concert series, a project of Incus Productions, happens every pay-day Friday until May 3. For details, call 637-1836 or 37.

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Gwyneth Paltrow
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SHALLOW Hal

MTRCB RATING: P13

Invitational Rudy Project Screening on
February 15, 2002 • 7:30 pm
SM Megamall Cinema 10

Regular showing on Feb. 20 at the SM CINEMAS.

SHOWING TODAY! SM Megamall Cinema 6

SHOWING TODAY AT PELIKULA AT LIPUNAN 2002

February 15	
11am	Kodak Prizewinners
1:30pm	Chito Rono's Eskapo
4pm	Ditsi Carolino's Masakit sa Mata & Mes De Guzman's Batang Trapo
6:30pm	Aureaus Solito's Basal Banar
9pm	THE BEATLES in A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

SHOWING TOMORROW
February 16, 2002
Neil Daza's
DISYEMBRE
Avic Ilagan's
SOWING SEEDS
at 4pm.
NEW 35MM SHORT FILMS AND MUSIC VIDEOS
at 6:30pm.
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the Chinese Film Festival
Art Film Greenbelt, Feb. 13 to 26

NOW SHOWING
in Greenbelt 1 Cinema 1
The Soong Sisters
(GENERAL PATRONAGE)
Feb. 16-19

NEXT ATTRACTION
Bride with White Hair
(RESTRICTED 18)
Feb. 20-22

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TOGETHER AT LAST
IN THE MOST ROMANTIC DATE-MOVIE
THIS VALENTINE'S!

RICHARD GOMEZ and REGINE VELASQUEZ

Sa pag-ibig
lahat ay maganda,
lahat may kabuluhan.

A film by Yam Laranas
Ikaw Lamang Hanggang Ngayon
Starring CANDY PANGILINAN TANYA GARCIA
Featuring the theme song "HANGGANG NGAYON" Music & Lyrics by Ogie Alcasid & Regine Velasquez, from the album "A BETTER MAN".
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GLORIETTA 1 formerly QUAD	GLORIETTA 4	GLORIETTA 4	GREENBELT	ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 IKAW LAMANG HANGGANG NGAYON in SONY DYNAMIC DIGITAL SOUND	1 IKAW LAMANG HANGGANG NGAYON in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND	5 KATE &LEOPOLD in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND	1 HAPPY TOGETHER (Exclusive Screenings) in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND	1 COLLATERAL DAMAGE THX in DSD/SDDS DIGITAL SOUND
2 COLLATERAL DAMAGE in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND	2 COLLATERAL DAMAGE in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND	6 in DTS/SDDS DIGITAL SOUND	2 COLLATERAL DAMAGE in SONY DYNAMIC DIGITAL SOUND	2 COLLATERAL DAMAGE in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3 VANILLA SKY in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND	3 COLLATERAL DAMAGE THX in DSD/SDDS/DTS DIGITAL SOUND	7 RIDING IN CARS W/ BOYS in DTS DIGITAL SOUND	3 THE GOLDEN BOWL (Phil. Premiere) in DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND	3 RIDING IN CARS W/ BOYS in DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4 KATE &LEOPOLD in DTS DIGITAL SOUND	4 VANILLA SKY in DTS DIGITAL SOUND	Art Film	4 PROMISES PROMISES FEB. 14, 15, 16 - 9 PM Onstage	4 KATE &LEOPOLD in DTS DIGITAL SOUND
				5 IKAW LAMANG HANGGANG NGAYON in DTS DIGITAL SOUND

The Ayala malls Events

THIS WEEK'S EVENTS

MAKATI

CALENDAR AD For this week:
Live at the Activity Center:
Feb. 16, 2002— Moonlight Serenade at the Lagoon
Post Valentines Dinner Show with Nonoy Zuñiga and Janet Basco
Feb. 16, 2002—Spell-a-Prize Raffle Draw
Feb. 17, 2002—Jericho Rosales and Cristine Hermosa, Live at the Activity Center 7:30 PM to 8:30 PM
Feb. 24, 2002—Little Love Acts (Card Decorating Contest and Card Making Contest for Mom and child and Dad and child)

ALABANG

ALABANG TOWN CENTER EVENTS
Feb. 13 & 14
NOTE-A-ROSE
Customers get one (1) ROSE upon presentation of P150 receipts (single or accumulated) with a Coke product purchase from any of the FOOD CHOICES AT THE TOWN establishments.
CHINESE DRAGON-LION DANCE
2:00 PM, MALLWIDE
Feb. 16 & 17
VALENTINES TOWN FAIR
We give you exciting activities with FOOD, GAMES, HENNA TATTOO, FACE PAINTING and SCHOOL BOOTHS as well as a LOVE SONG REQUEST or GREET A FRIEND at RX 93.1 and Clowns at the Town Plaza.
MY KIDDIE VALENTINE SHOW
Feb. 16, 11:00 am - Town Plaza & Feb. 17, 4:00 pm Cinema Lobby
PIDO with TAKE ONE Band Show
Feb. 16, 7:00 pm - Town Plaza
ANONYMOUS FASHION SHOW
Feb. 17, 4:00 pm - Town Plaza
For inquiries, please call Customer Service at 842-2782

CEBU

CALENDAR AD
For the period of Feb. 1 to 3, 2002
Valentine Card Making & Cookie Decorating Contest
Feb. 3, 10 & 24, 2002
(3:30 PM, Activity Center)
USC Festival of the Arts
Feb. 1, 2002
(4:00 PM, Activity Center)
Fashion Show w/ Latin Band
Feb. 1, 2002
(6:30 PM, Lagoon Area)

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RIDING IN CARS W/ BOYS - P 13 10:40, 1:20, 4:00, 6:40, 9:30	KATE & LEOPOLD - GP 10:40, 1:00, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 11:00	COLLATERAL DAMAGE - R 18 12:50, 3:10, 5:30, 7:50, 10:10
IKAW LAMANG HANGGANG NGAYON - GP 11:10, 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:00	VANILLA SKY - R 18 1:15, 4:00, 6:45, 9:30	COLLATERAL DAMAGE - R 18 11:20, 1:40, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50, 11:10

Matinee, P80, Mon.-Fri., 11:00 am to 4:45 pm Screenings, Free Seating.

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VANILLA SKY
11:10/ 1:50/ 4:30/ 7:10/ 10:00
R 18

CINEMA 2
COLLATERAL DAMAGE
10:30/ 12:50/ 3:10/ 5:30/ 7:50/ 10:10
R 18

Matinee: P80.00 - Screenings before 5:00pm, Monday thru Friday (Free Seating).
Reserved Seating: P120.00 - After 5:00pm; Saturday, Sunday, Holidays.
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MUSIC MUSEUM
February 15 "VALENTINE KA DYAN" w/ Gladys & The Boxers
P800 - ORCH / P500 - BAL. 9:00 PM
FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS CALL: 721-6726 OR 721-0635

Comedy of quiz-show errors

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

QUIZMASTER: *Ano ang* currency *ng* Saudi Arabia?

Contetant: Yen!

(Yen *ang akala mo.*)

* * *

Quizmaster: *Ano'ng* root crop *ang hinahalo sa* carrot cake?

Contestant: Mustard!

(Yuk!)

* * *

Quizmaster: *Ano'ng* continent *ang matatagpuan sa* North Pole?

Contestant: Africa!

(Stop standing on your head!)

* * *

Quizmaster: *Ano'ng* "eye" *ang tawag sa pasa sa mata?*

Contestant: Hematoma!

(Hematomeye?) No, blackeye.)

* * *

Quizmaster: *Ano'ng* P word *ang ginagamit* to describe the grieving Blessed Virgin Mary?

Contestant: Pilgrimage!

(No, Pieta.)

* * *

Quizmaster: *Ano ang* missing word *sa* title ng inspirational *na kanta na* "You'll Never Walk ___"?

Contestant: "Away"!

("You'll Never Walk Away"? What's so inspiring about that?!)

* * *

Quizmaster: *Ano'ng inaayos sa* Japanese art *na* Ikebana?

Contestant: *Papel!*

(No, *bulaklak!)*

* * *

Quizmaster: Ano'ng kinokolekta ng isang philatelist?

Contestant: Tissues!

(Some people collect tissues? No, stamps!)

* * *

Quizmaster: *Sino'ng* Richard *at* Karen *ang nagpasikat sa kantang* "We've Only Just Begun"?

Contestant: Reynoso!

(No, not Richard Reynoso. Richard and Karen Carpenter!)

* * *

Bands at Bedrock

BEDROCK Bar and Grill on Jupiter st. in Makati features these entertainers this month: Monday, Degree and Soulid bands. Tuesday, BNO and Tribe of Levi. Wednesday, Elements and Yamani with Great Divide. Thursday, Next Level and Real Groove. Friday, NewLevel and SoundMinds. Saturday, MOG (Merchants of Groove) and Next Page. Call 897-3480.

'Illusione'

TOP female impersonators will be showcased by director Fritz Ynfante, choreographer **Douglas Nierras** and image consultant **James Cooper** in the musical revue "Illusione" at Onstage in Greenbelt from Feb. 22 to March 16.

The show will feature production numbers that include a Broadway suite, Black Divas medley, Local Divas medley, White Divas medley, Swan Lake, Lady Marmalade, monologues, plus appearances by **Cooper** and **Ernest Santiago** of Coco Banana fame. Call 891-5610 (Ticketworld).

Marianne Oliva joins 'MTB'

AFTER winning the Starquest 2001 talent search, **Marianne Oliva** has joined Channel 2's "Magandang Tanghali, Bayan" as a regular, performing with the likes of host **Randy Santiago** and **Geneva Cruz** in the show's opening number.

The regular stint has done wonders for Marianne's popularity, and performing with established talents has given her the inspiration and drive to aim for the bigtime herself.

Newseason

ON the new season of "Ally McBeal" on Star World, Ally (**Calista Flockhart**) finally finds her Prince Charming with Larry Paul (**Robert Downey Jr.**). For their part, Mark and Elaine hook up, but Ling and Richard go their separate ways.

The sitcom is aired on Star World every Wednesday at 9 p.m., with replays on Thursdays at 12:30 a.m. and Sundays at noontime.

Theater-concert artists gather in Valentine dinner-show

SHOWS

VALENTINE'S Day goes beyond the stereotype notions of romance when four world-class performers take centerstage in a special concert tomorrow, Feb. 16.

"More Than Valentine" fuses the collective talents of theater-concert veterans Robert Seña, Isay Alvarez, Jamie Rivera and Anna Fegi, with the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra.

To be staged at The Convenarium at Crossroad 77, (located at #44 Mother Ignacia cor. Sct. Reyes Sts., QC), the concert will showcase a repertoire of Broadway hits, OPM tunes, classical arias and a variety of nostalgic, sentimental love songs in keeping up with the occasion.

The Convenarium at Crossroad 77 is slowly gaining distinction as one of the best medium-sized multipurpose facilities in Quezon City. To date, it has become the venue of choice for concerts, seminars, exhibits and conventions. Among the more prominent showbiz luminaries who have performed at Crossroad 77 are Gary Valenciano, Martin Nieverra, Kuh Ledesma, Side A, South Border and the Ugoy-Ugoy Band.

ALCASID

"More Than Valentine" is directed Isay Alvarez, with musical direction by Rodel Colmenar of the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra.

The concert is a benefit for Turning Point Foundation, a Tagaytay-based substance abuse recovery center and Lydia's Helping Hand Mission, an educational assistance group helping out indigent families in Parola, Tondo.

For tickets and reservations, call Crossroad 77 at 372-5407. Dinner is at 6:30 p.m. Show starts 8:30 p.m.

Mall tour

POP star Ogie Alcasid continues to promote his latest album, "A Better Man," under Viva Records.

The album is reportedly enjoying good sales in the market. In fact, it has recently entered the top ten OPM album chart of Odyssey record bars all over the country.

The first song of the album, "Ikaw Sana," was a smash hit.

The second song, "Hanggang Ngayon," is a duet with Regine Velasquez and the theme song of her current movie of the same title with Richard Gomez.

Ogie embarks on a promo tour in all SM malls. Starting today, Ogie holds a special show at SM Megamall.

This will be followed by another show at SM Southmall on Feb. 17. The rest of the schedule are as follows: SM Sucat on Feb. 22, SM North Edsa on Feb. 24, SM Manila on March 1, SM Bacoor on March 2, SM Fairview on March 3, SM Pampanga on March 8 and SM Iloilo on March 9.

Guesting in Ogie's mall tour is Casanova, the newest boy band in town.

Show time is 4 p.m.

Bar tour

WEEKEND partying is going to be hotter with the Mild Seven Bar Tour 2002. The gorgeous models and the rest of the gang will go around town all Fridays and Saturdays to give a taste of the night scene and their brand of smoke.

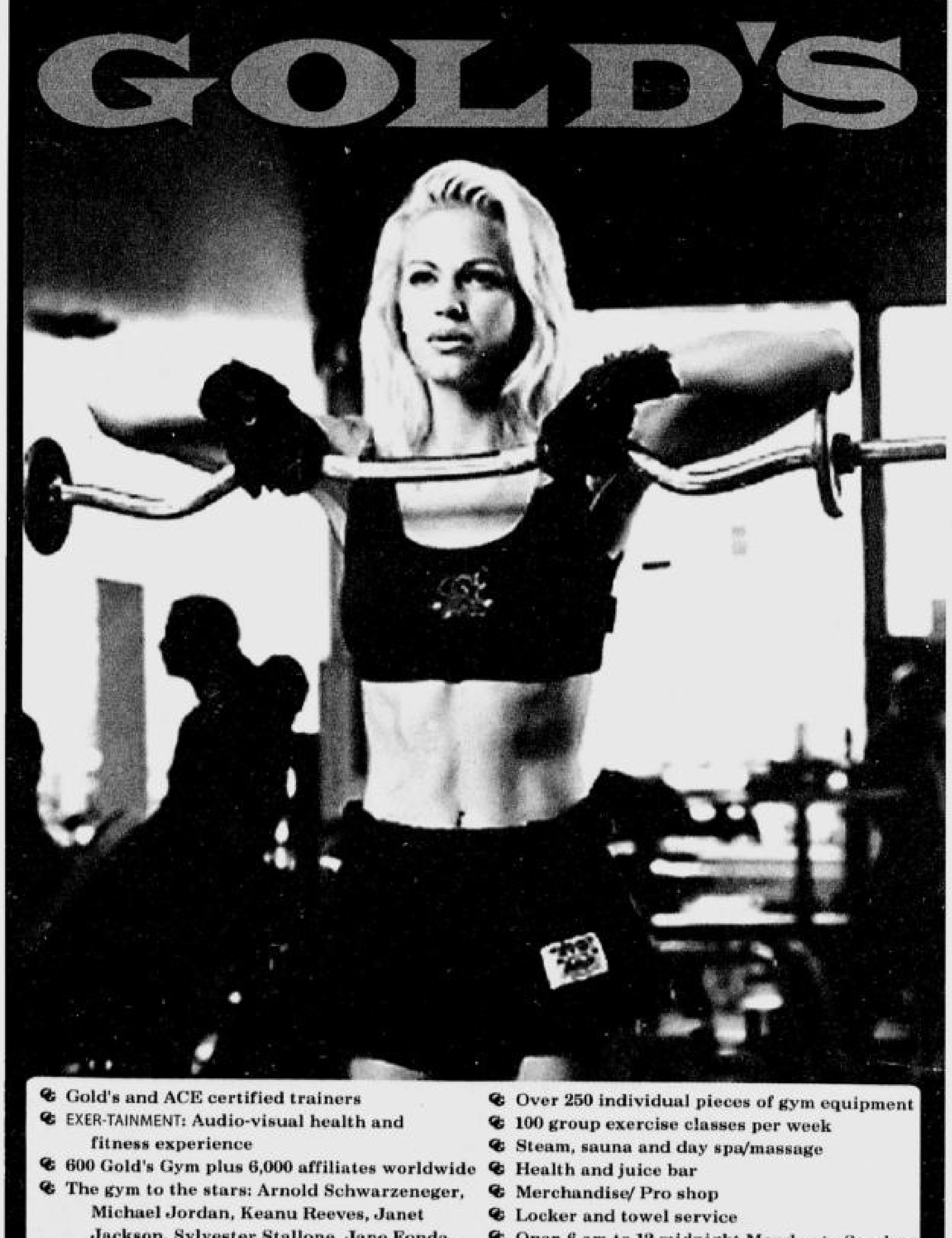
They've cooked up new gimmicks to make sure you have fun while playing with the gang. Check them out at your favorite bars as they play "Mild Seven Searching For Seven" wherein 7 lucky partyphiles with Mild Seven cigarettes will automatically win fabulous prizes.

Tonight, the gang will celebrate post-Valentine euphoria in Makati as they check out the scene at Wasabi, Venezia, Matti, Shiraz, Che and Café Overdrive.

The party fever spreads until Saturday, Feb. 16, when Mild Seven gives away caps, lighters and T-shirts at Streetlife, Ultracafé, Congo Grille, Hutu's Hut, Tequilla Joe's, Pier One and Cable Car Pasay Road.

NATURAL PAYS COURTESY CALL ON GMA

Natural, the newest boy band sensation from the United States, was accompanied by their discover, Trans Continental Records USA chief executive officer Lou Pearlman (back row, third from right), when the group recently paid a courtesy call to Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang. The five-man band staged a highly successful promo tour in Manila to boost their debut single, "Put Your Arms Around Me," which has been certified gold in the US, selling over 800,000 copies. Trans Continental Records USA forged an alliance with a local group headed by Antonio M. Garcia to form Trans Continental Records Manila Inc., a music promotion, distribution and entertainment company that will promote not only US artists, but Filipino and Southeast Asian talents as well. Pearlman was the man behind the success of teen heartthrobs N'Sync, O-Town and Backstreet Boys, among others.



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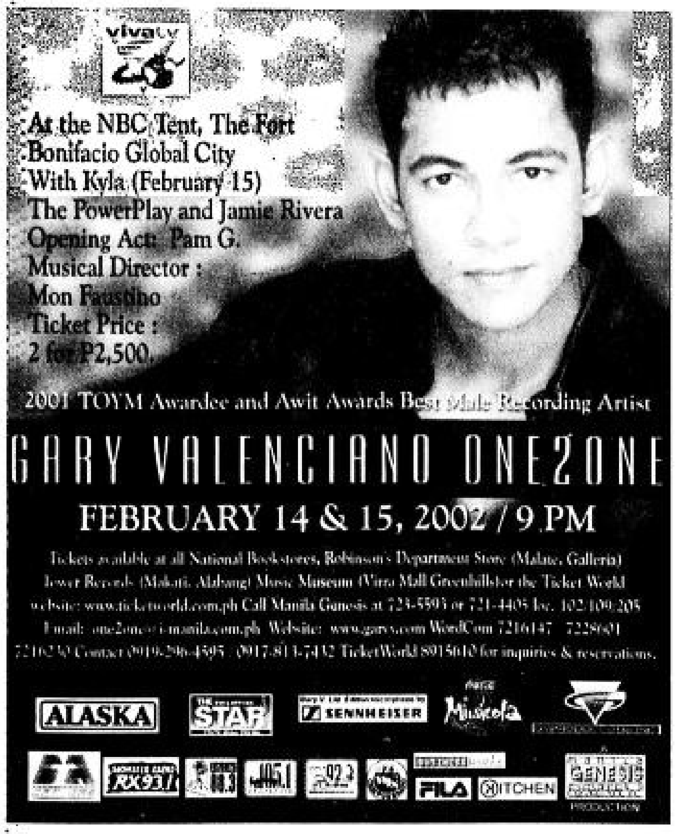
ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Louie C. Camino**


vivatv

At the NBC Tent, The Fort
Bonifacio Global City
With Kyla (February 15)
The PowerPlay and Jamie Rivera
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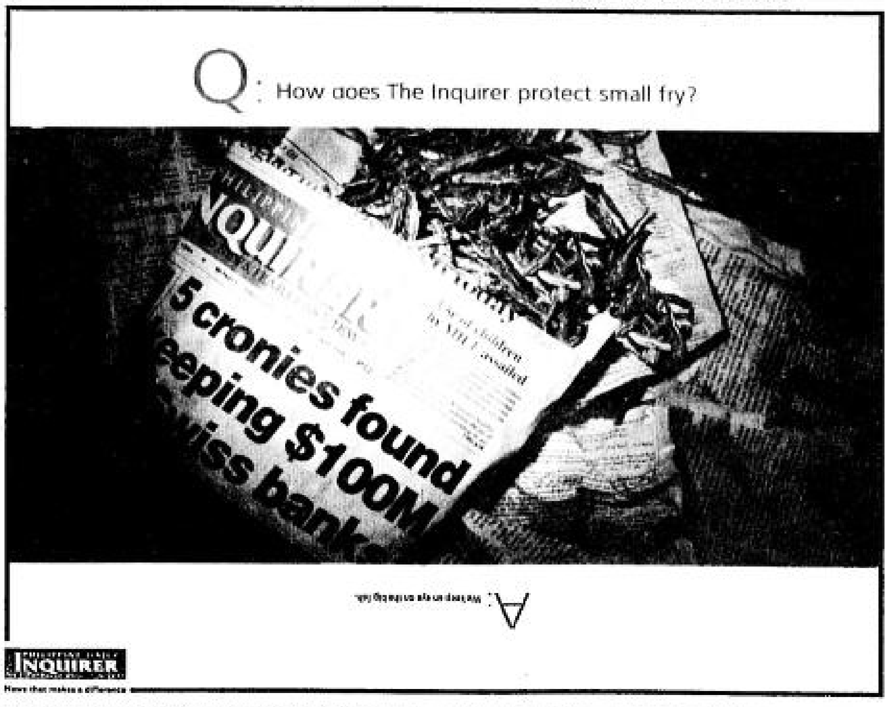
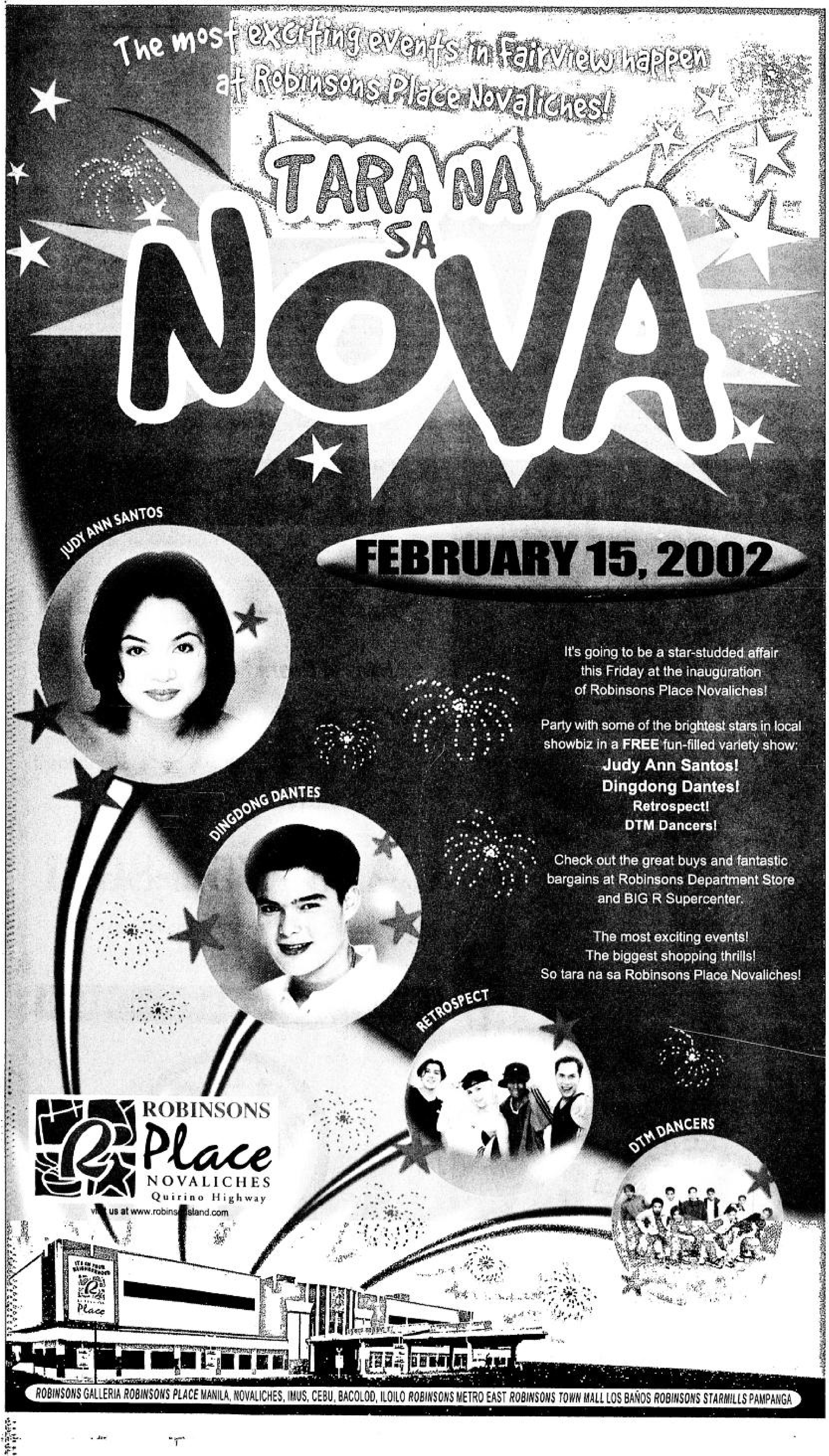

Q: How does The Inquirer protect small fry?

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
News that makes a difference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GOMEZ. With Regine Velasquez in "Ikaw Lamang Hanggang Ngayon."

Richard at his best as a romantic hero

By Remy M. Umerez

THERE are a good number of reasons Richard Gomez accepted "Ikaw Lamang Hanggang Ngayon," Viva Films Valentine offering.

And one of the best reasons comes with a name: Regine Velasquez.

"I got more excited when they informed me that my leading lady would be Regine. I have always admired her as a singer."

Director Yam Laranas (the man who megged Richard's Agfa commercial and a good friend of the actor) made sure his actors were comfortable with each other before shooting the big kissing scene—the only one throughout the film.

It was shot on the last two shooting days.

When asked to comment on the scene, Richard confessed: "I have kissed many actresses in the past, and in Regine's case, she has the softest lips I've ever kissed.

He went on to describe Regine's lips as to be "almost untouched."

"I had to be extra careful doing the scene because she is 'Regine,' and not a bold star with whom I can tumble," he added.

Richard is the third actor with whom Regine has agreed to have a love scene. Her kissing scenes with Robin Padilla ("Kailangan Ko'y Ikaw") and Aga Muhlach ("Pangako") were reasons enough for people to flock to the theaters. The romantic scenes were so real, they continue to linger after the images fade from the screen.

And Regine returned the compliment when she remarked how much of a gentleman Richard was in the scene.

"I am thankful none of my leading men has taken advantage of the situation," Regine said. "On my part, when I agreed to do something, I see to it that I do it well. Kissing scenes are the most difficult thing to do. Richard has a way of easing the tension and I appreciated that."

She went on to describe Richard as truly nice.

"I gauged that by the way he treats the production crew," she said. "He has a good heart, and I know it is not a put-on."

Richard has reached the point in his career where he can be more selective in taking up movie offers. For Richard, it is the script that really matters. Even if it has the approval of his manager, Richard makes sure he reads the script page by page, making suggestions when necessary.

"I feel inspired when something different comes along," he said. "I am challenged instantly. At times when I am in doubt, it is my wife who urges me to give it a try. I trust her intuition. *Naiiba ang pananaw* (it's a different outlook), coming from a woman's point of view. We both liked the script of Mel del Rosario. I realized it is a role I haven't portrayed in a long time."

Richard has done every conceivable role, including anti-heroes as in "Linlang," "Wating," "Dahas" and "Ikaw Lang ang Minahal."

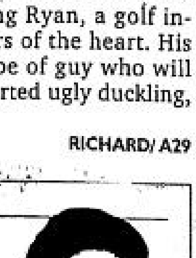
Still, it cannot be denied that his fans like Richard best when he is playing the romantic hero. Love stories like "Minsan Minahal Kita," "Hihintayin Kita sa Langit" and "Ngayon at Kailan Man," are examples of films that showcased his debonaire looks.

In "Hanggang Ngayon," he returns to the romantic fold portraying Ryan, a golf instructor adept in matters of the heart. His character is also the type of guy who will intimidate a shy, introverted ugly duckling, like Regine's Katherine.

RICHARD/ A29

KRIS AND TELL

Kris Aquino



Kris Aquino is on birthday leave. Her column will appear next week.

BUSINESS

Editor **Raul O. Marcelo** ◉ *Assistant Editor* **Corrie S. Narisma**

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Lucio Tan eyes stake in Smart, Digitel

By Abigail L. Ho

BEER and tobacco magnate Lucio Tan is considering buying a stake in either cellular giant Smart Communications Inc. or Gokongwei-owned Digital Telecommunications Phil. Inc., an INQUIRER source disclosed yesterday.

The source said Tan currently had his eyes set on acquiring a telecommunications firm to add to his long list of businesses.

Aside from Allied Bank, Asia Brewery and Fortune Tobacco, Tan also controls Philippine National Bank and pioneer flag carrier Philippine Airlines.

Dominant carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., which owns 100 percent of Smart, is selling a 15- to 20-percent stake in the company to help it settle about $1.3 billion in maturing debts from this year to 2004.

TAN

PANGILINAN

GOKONGWEI

A highly placed source from the PLDT group said in an earlier interview that Japanese cellular giant NTT DoCoMo and Australian firm Vodafone were in discussions with the group for a minority stake in Smart.

In another interview, PLDT president and chief executive Manuel Pangilinan said potential investors could be either financial or industry entities.

The source said Tan could approach PLDT with an offer to acquire a stake higher than the maximum of 20 percent being put on the auction block.

Digitel, on the other hand, is also in talks with potential investors to help it enter the tightly competitive local cellular service arena.

Asked how Tan would approach the Gokongwei group with a proposal for a stake in the telecommunications firm, the source said: "He'll do everything he can to get in if he really wants to."

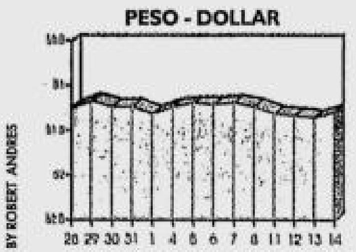
But companies owned by Tan and Gokongwei are currently at odds with each other. Tan's PAL and Gokongwei's Cebu Pacific Air are engaged in a row over the additional flight frequencies to Seoul.

In an earlier interview, Tan noted though that he and Gokongwei were "friendly competitors."

The source said this competition could turn into a partnership if Tan puts in an offer that is really hard to refuse for the Gokongweis.

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



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P51.295 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 14, 2002

¥132.46 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 14, 2002

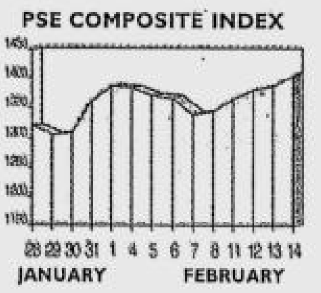
GOLD: $301.75/302.75
per ounce Hong Kong,
Feb. 11, 2002

Feb. 14, 2002

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	1.147315	1.000000	51.3210
Japan	Yen	0.008605	0.007500	0.3849
United Kingdom	Pound	1.638596	1.428200	73.2967
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.147105	0.128217	6.5802
Switzerland	Franc	0.674733	0.588097	30.1817
Canada	Dollar	0.721582	0.628931	32.2774
Singapore	Dollar	0.626948	0.546448	28.0443
Australia	Dollar	0.584470	0.509424	26.1441
Bahrain	Dinar	3.043439	2.652661	136.1372
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.305951	0.266667	13.6856
Brunei	Dollar	0.625683	0.545345	27.9877
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000112	0.000098	0.0050
Thailand	Baht	0.026213	0.022847	1.1725
UAE	Dirham	0.312450	0.272331	13.9763
Korea	Won	0.000875	0.000763	0.0392
Euro	Euro	1.000000	0.871600	44.7314
Brazil	Real	0.474489	0.413565	21.2246
Denmark	Kroner	0.134535	0.117261	6.0180
India	Rupee	0.023607	0.020576	1.0560
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.301925	0.263158	13.5055
Mexico	New Peso	0.126433	0.110199	5.6555
New Zealand	Dollar	0.479446	0.417885	21.4463
Norway	Kroner	0.127900	0.111478	5.7212
Pakistan	Rupee	0.019153	0.016694	0.8568
South Africa	Rand	0.099756	0.086947	4.4622
Sweden	Kroner	0.108305	0.094399	4.8447
Syria	Pound	0.022365	0.019493	1.0004
Taiwan	NT Dollar	0.032799	0.028588	1.4672
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.001150	0.001002	0.0514

STOCK MARKET

Stocks hit 7.5-month high



(See stock market report on Page B6)

STOCKS closed at their highest level in seven-and-a-half months yesterday, with investors anticipating another interest rate cut by the central bank, traders said.

Shortly after the close of trade, the Bangko Sentral announced a 25 basis points reduction in overnight rates.

They added that upbeat comments from the government about its economic targets on Wednesday also aided the bullish sentiment.

The main index ended up 18.85 points, or 1.36 percent, at 1,407.49 points, breaching the 1,400 points psychological resistance level which had

STOCKS/ B3

Bangko Sentral lowers interest rates further

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE POLICY-MAKING Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday decided to cut overnight interest rates by 25 basis points.

"The Monetary Board believes that the generally benign inflation outlook for the year, given expectations of favorable food supply conditions and stable oil prices, provides for monetary easing," Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura said in a statement.

Effective today, the central bank's overnight rates will be at 7.25 percent for borrowing and 9.5 percent for lending, their lowest since August 1995.

It was the 18th successive rate cut by the central bank, which is trying to persuade banks to increase lending to productive sectors of the economy instead of parking funds in interest-bearing accounts.

The easing began in December 2000, and brings the accumulated cuts to 7.75 percentage points.

Under a tiering scheme for overnight borrowing, only the first P5 billion placed by any bank with the Bangko Sentral will be eligible for the 7.25 percent interest.

The next P5 billion will fetch a return of 4.25 percent while all funds in excess of P10 billion will only earn 1.25 percent.

The overnight borrowing is now slightly lower than the 91-day treasury bill rate of 7.278 percent.

"Lower interest rates would spur economic growth, help ease the debt servicing cost of the corporate (sector) and the national government and allow banks to lend more aggressively," the central bank governor said in the statement.

INQUIRER sources said that despite some reservations, the Monetary Board approved the recommendation of the advisory committee to bring down its policy rates some more after reaching a consensus that the low rates would not endanger an inflation target of 5-6 percent this year.

Annual inflation in January was at a 21-month low of 3.8 percent, and government officials have said the number could fall further in coming months.

A stable peso also helped convince monetary authorities to bring down the key rates further. The BSP said that despite a lower rate differential, it did not see any reason for investors to shift from peso to dollar assets given that US interest rates remained very low.

BANGKO/ B3

Banks chide DTI chief for rate claims

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

BANKERS yesterday chided Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II for his sweeping denunciation of some banks' exorbitant lending rates which they claimed was based on the former Wall Street investment banker's "misinterpretation" of the supposed 5-percentage-point cap on the banks' spread over the 91-day treasury bill rate.

A source from the Bankers Association of the Philippines said Roxas misconstrued the gentleman's agreement between the banks and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to limit the spread on their loans as covering all of the banks' loans.

The BAP source said the agreement merely covered the loans to prime clients, which meant that they could charge a spread higher than the 5 percentage points to non-prime or regular clients depending on the borrowers' risk profile.

The source said that the banks could not afford to charge a maximum 5-percentage-point spread on all of their loans because it could affect the viability of their operations.

Roxas earlier lambasted the banks for keeping their lending rates high despite the

BANKS/ B6

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0160 Series of 2002

Action sought vs Filinvest copycats

STOCKBROKERS urged yesterday the Philippine Stock Exchange to take steps to prevent a fiasco similar to Filinvest Land Inc.'s controversial P1.2-billion convertible bond float that led to a sharp drop in the property firm's stock prices.

In an interview, Regina Capital Development Corp. nominee Marita Limlingan, who led a petition questioning Filinvest's convertible bond float, expressed fears that other listed companies might follow suit and come up with transactions disadvantageous to their minority shareholders.

PSE president Ernest Leung stressed, however, that with the investment community's growing vigilance, it was becoming more and more difficult for wayward companies to hide trading irregularities.

On Feb. 5, Filinvest disclosed that it issued P1.2 billion worth of bonds to Reco Grandhomes Pte. Ltd., a unit of the Government of Singapore Investment Corp. Pte., that could immediately be converted into Filinvest shares, raising Reco's existing stake in Filinvest to 23.4 percent from 12 percent.

The conversion price agreed upon was between P1.70 and P1.875, far lower than Filinvest's P2.60 per share price on the day the disclosure was made.

As a result of the disclosure, Filinvest's share price plunged as investors dumped the stock.

Limlingan said brokers felt that the transaction was very much like an equity issue and should be subject to the stock exchange's rule on additional listing of shares.

Leung, meanwhile, told reporters in a news briefing that the huge interest in the Filinvest probe indicated that listed companies would have to be more accountable as far as the disclosure of material information was concerned.

"The active interest from the public is very welcome," Leung said. "It makes the companies more conscious of their activities."

Leung said the PSE was continuing its "fact-finding" efforts on Filinvest to satisfy the queries raised by a group of brokers. *Elena R. Torrijos and Doris C. Dumlao*

Top assembler predicts modest auto recovery

LOCAL automotive sales should enjoy modest growth this year after contracting by 8.7 percent in 2001, an official for top assembler Toyota Motor Philippines Inc. said Monday.

"We sold 19,894 units last year, and right now we're predicting sales of around 21,000," representing a 5.6-percent improvement, Toyota Philippines spokesperson Ariel de Jesus said.

Total industry sales for 2002 should rise by 4.3 percent to around 80,000 units as economic growth picks up, he added.

"For one thing, there's an improved economic outlook right now, and I think the market is feeling the same optimism, so slowly, the automotive industry is enjoying customer confidence again," De Jesus said.

Last year, total sales fell by 8.7 percent to 76,670 as economic growth slowed to 3.4 percent.

Motor vehicle sales fell by 4 percent from a year earlier to 5,508 units in January, but passenger car sales improved by 19.2 percent from a year earlier to 1,923 units, according to the industry association Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc.

De Jesus said it was "still to early to tell" how the entire year would go, and that full-year sales could depend on the strength of the US recovery from recession.

But he said early signs showed Toyota, which has had the biggest share of the local market for the last 11 years, would maintain its market leadership this year with strong sales of its compact sedan, the Corolla Altis, and a modified Asian-utility vehicle called the Revo.

"We're expecting (an) even better performance this year. We expect ourselves to remain the market leader in 2002," De Jesus said.

De Jesus said Toyota rivals here have been making aggressive campaigns including interest-free mortgages for certain models.

"So we're going to see the same trend of sustained growth in sales for the first half of the year," De Jesus said. *AFP*

Country's third yacht club set to rise in Davao

DAVAO CITY—The country's third marina and yacht club is set to rise on a 4-hectare area here.

FM Ibarreta Diving Co., an Australian-Filipino firm, has announced that it has completed its plans to develop a $40-million world-class marine park and resort here.

In General Santos City, meanwhile, a representative of Canadian firm Excel Medical Systems has met with local officials to his company's planned expansion project.

Excel Medical's Fred Fischer said his company was planning to use General Santos as a base for its operations in Southeast Asia.

He said his company was planning to invest some $50 million in the Philippines.

In Davao City, FM Ibarreta general manager Fabian Ibarreta said John Browsel International Inc. agreed to provide funds for his company's marina and yacht club project in the city, with Barclays Bank Plc. of London as lead fund provider.

The country currently has two yacht clubs, one in Manila and another in Subic, Zambales.

When completed, the park, estimated to cost about P1.614 billion, will feature a hotel, bars, restaurants, a barge landing, a yacht club and other amenities.

The firm has already submitted a proposed memorandum of agreement for development, management and operations of the port for 25 years to the Davao city council. *Joel B. Escovilla, Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Menzi's ghost

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

EXPECT the ghost of Hans Menzi to make a comeback, kicking and screaming, at the newspaper now controlled by his former minority partner, Emilio Yap.

The Supreme Court decision upholding the 37-percent ownership of the estate of the late Marcos aide-de-camp over the Yap daily means that Menzi estate executor Manuel Montecillo will finally be entitled to several board seats and veto power within the daily after nearly 16 years of battling it out with the combined might of the government and the awesome judicial reach of Don Emilio.

More important, the Menzi estate will finally now be able to claim the P1.2 billion in cash plus P2 billion in stock dividends that the Yap daily had denied it over the years.

What made this legal saga destined for the legal books is that the Menzi bloc was sold in 1988 by the Presidential Commission on Good Government, then chaired by the late Ramon Diaz, despite the fact that the original share certificates covering the bloc have all along been in the custody of Montecillo.

It should be fun watching the Yap daily's nominal chair, Estrada-era Education Secretary Andrew Gonzalez (he of the De La Salle fame), explain where the disputed Menzi shares eventually ended up—to Don Emilio or the unsuspecting public and the paper's employees?

But no matter which party the Menzi bloc had been illegally sold to, the net effect would be a dilution of the imperious Yap grip over the paper when restitution time comes.

Aside from the newspaper, the Menzi estate may now finally claim the estimated P275 million locked up within Yap's thrift bank, Philippine Trust. The money has, over the years, grown from the P40 million deposit when it was caught up in the legal controversy in 1986.

The chair of Philtrust is, incidentally, former Central Bank Governor Jaime Laya.

Now the managing partner of an accounting firm bearing his name, Laya has promised that the P275 million will not do a $600 million, the latter referring to sorry saga of the $600 million in fictitious funds the central bank claimed it had during the crisis year of 1983, when Laya was central bank keeper.

The bigger question that Laya should answer is, where is the P1.2 billion in cash dividend of the Menzi estate? Is it in the Yap paper or is it in Philtrust?

Mandarin's ang paw

TRADITIONAL greetings of prosperity and lucky *ang paw* envelopes had arrived ahead of the Chinese New Year for the low-profile Mandarin Securities.

Mandarin, controlled by the Luys, the family behind the striking LKG Tower beside the spanking new GT Tower on Ayala Avenue, had been heavily dumping shares of Filinvest Land days before the botched announcement of a Singaporean buy-in sent Filinvest share price into a tailspin.

According to the grapevine, those who lapped up Mandarin's selling spree were mostly foreign brokerages who, with their local allies, are now clamoring for an investigation into the steady rise and sudden fall of Filinvest Land.

At this stage, any allusion to insider trading is, to quote new PSE president Ernest Leung, purely "speculative."

Heard through the grapevine

MITSUI Insurance of Japan is set to take majority control of FGU Insurance, and rename the new combine Mitsui-Ayala, to reflect the new minority status of the Ayala-controlled insurance company.

(Cocktales may be reached by e-mail at cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or at cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Bangko

From page B1

"Going forward, monetary policy will proceed on a cautious footing. The BSP believes that while the risks to inflation outlook have lessened, they nonetheless still exist," the bank said.

Buenaventura, who also heads the advisory committee, said in an earlier interview that the central bank could bring down its key rates to as low as 6.5 percent this year if the government would decide to bring down its inflation target to a range of 4 to 5 percent.

"If the government would downscale its inflation target to 4 to 5 percent, then it would give us ample room to cut rates. We could do 50 to 100 basis points more within the year," Buenaventura said earlier. ***With a report from Reuters***

Case of the fake Rubie blades:

Gillette
STAINLESS

What you should know about Intellectual Property Rights

The proliferation of pirated VCDs, detergents, clothes and other commercial items have sparked a modern-day crusade among legitimate businessmen in the country. Sadly, most of them are not aware of patents and trademarks, which when produced illegally and proven inside the courtroom to be counterfeit/fake, could make unscrupulous traders pay the high price of landing behind bars. So what do regular retailers and wholesalers need to know about "Intellectual Property Rights?"

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) aims at safeguarding creators and other producers of intellectual goods and services by granting them certain time-limited rights to control the use of those products. Because of this, more and more companies right now are out to defend and safeguard their corporate identities even if it means thousands of pesos in litigation expenses. But what is IPR and how does one company reinforce and impose its industrial rights over illegitimate businessmen out right there?

IPR refers to creations of the mind: inventions, literary and artistic works, symbols, names, images, and designs used in commerce. There are actually two categories of IPR: industrial property and copyright. Industrial property includes inventions (patents), trademarks, industrial designs and geographic indications of source. Copyright, meanwhile, includes literary and artistic works such as novels, poems and plays, films, musical works, artistic works like drawings, paintings, photographs, sculptures and architectural designs.

The present statute of the Philippines on IPR is Republic Act No. 8293, known as the "Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines" which was approved on June 6, 1997 and which took effect on January 1, 1998. This law allowed the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in coordination with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Philippine National Police (PNP), to seize and confiscate items produced illegally in the local market. Numerous raids have already taken place all over Metro Manila as well as in the provinces to ensure that the proliferation of these fake items and goods (e.g. clothes, bags, accessories, VCDs, detergents and even razors) are put to a halt as soon as possible.

Based on the DTI's accomplishment report (Jan. to Sept. 1998), there were 2,673,519 pieces of confiscated goods in 1999 and 294,607 pieces in 1998. The estimated value of these confiscated goods was pegged at P272,017,127.00 in 1999 and P35,615,550.00 in 1998.

The Gillette anti-fake campaign

One of the many companies affected by unscrupulous businessmen who devour a huge slice of their revenues is Gillette Philippines –the makers of Rubie blades and razors. Throughout the years, Gillette has been known as the manufacturer of reliable, clean and safe Rubie blades used by thousands of Filipino men and women for their shaving needs.

Lately though, Rubie blades have been encountering problems regarding the production and sale of its products. There is now a proliferation of fake Rubie blades in several areas in Metro Manila and the provinces, forcing Gillette Phils. to take legal action against these perpetrators.

Gillette Phils. has set its eyes on bringing these illegal retailers and wholesalers to court and suing them for infringement and counterfeit charges. So far, the company has been providing leads to the NBI and DTI and has assisted them in several raids conducted along Carriedo St., Quiapo, Manila. To date, Gillette agents and local officials have already confiscated a total of 42,000 fake Gillette blades in several raids conducted in Metro Manila.

Buy only genuine Rubie blades

Made from 100 percent stainless steel, genuine Rubie blades are clean looking, shiny and long lasting. It also has special perforations on the side to be used as a guide for opening the packets. These packets are made out of thicker paper and have clearer and sharper design prints. Lastly, the packets themselves have serial numbers at the sides of the packs which can be read and felt.

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3
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Next steps

Gillette is set to file charges of trademark infringement against the owners of the three trading firms selling fake blades. The seized fake blades, which will be used as evidence against the erring retail stores, were brought to the NBI for safekeeping.

The company has likewise resolved to go after those traders who are riding on the popularity of the Rubie brand. Gillette would also use the full extent of the law to prosecute those who are violating its trademark.

Indeed, Gillette Phils. will not stop until these illegal sellers are put behind bars and are made to face the charges filed against them in the proper courts. Gillette has only one message to these erring businessmen: "We'll see you in court."

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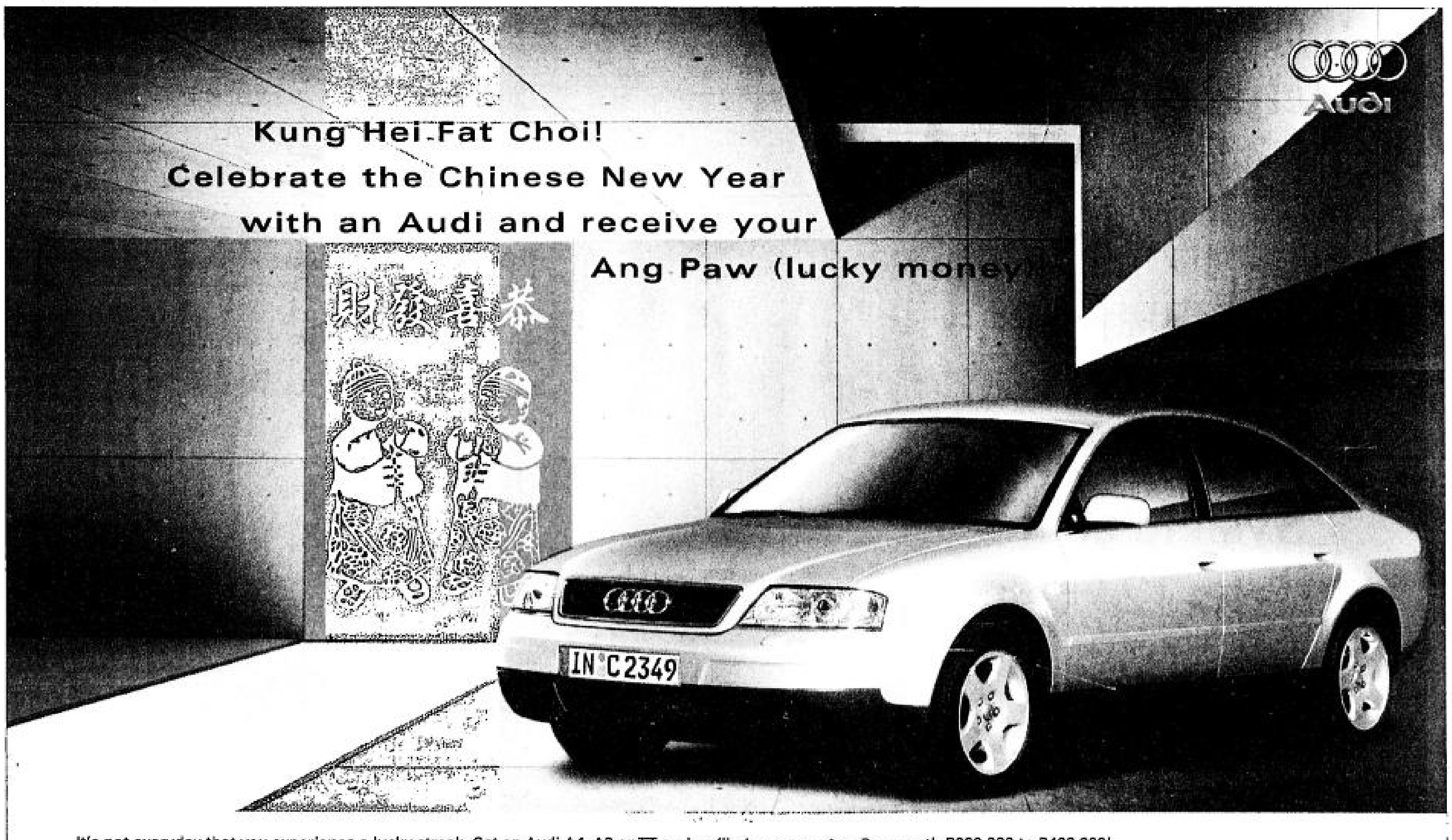

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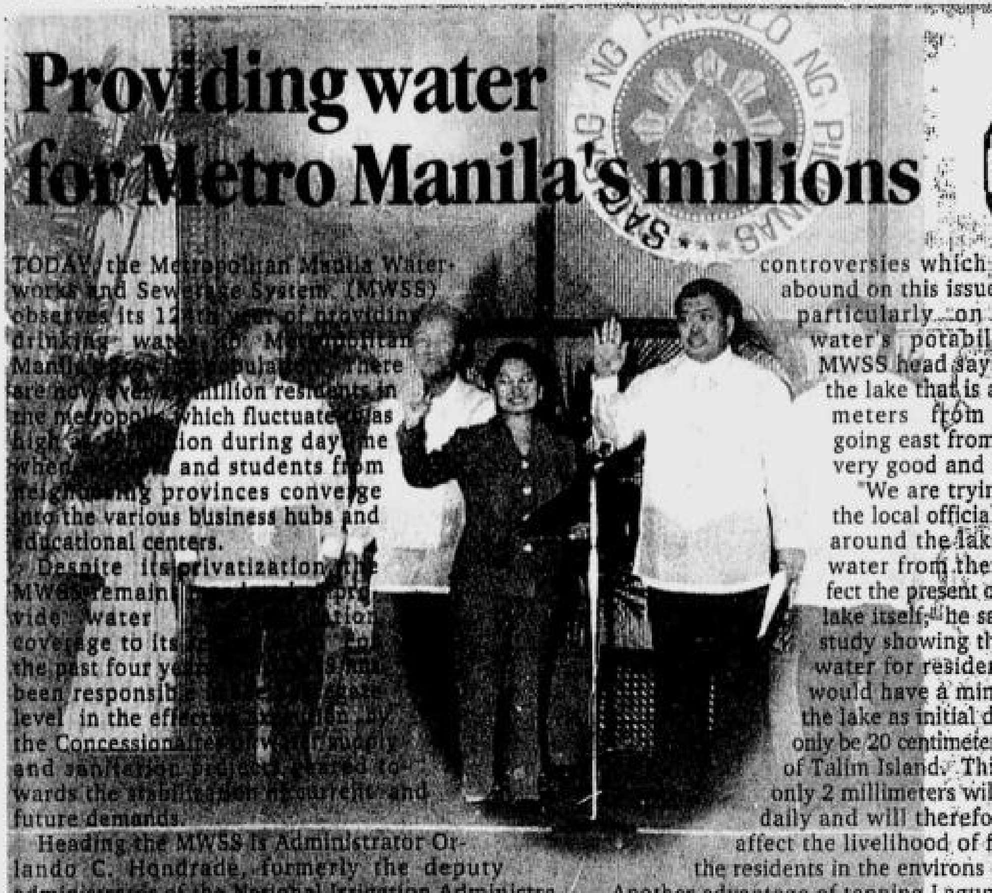
METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS AND SEWERAGE SYSTEM - *124th Founding Anniversary*

Aries Espinosa *Editor* sprojects@inquirer.com.ph **Aggie Pinili** *Account Manager*

Providing water for Metro Manila's millions



TODAY, the Metropolitan Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) observes its 124th year of providing drinking water to Metropolitan Manila's growing population. There are now over [illegible] million residents in the metropolis which fluctuate to as high as [illegible] million during daytime when [illegible] and students from neighboring provinces converge into the various business hubs and educational centers.

Despite its privatization, the MWSS remains [illegible] to provide water [illegible] coverage to its [illegible] the past four years [illegible] been responsible [illegible] level in the effic[illegible] the Concessionaires [illegible] supply and sanitation projects geared towards the stabilization of current and future demands.

Heading the MWSS is Administrator Orlando C. Hondrade, formerly the deputy administrator of the National Irrigation Administration and a career officer of the government with a service record spanning over 25 years.

The commissioning of the Umiray Angat Transbasin Project in June 2000 added 4 million cubic meters per day, supposedly enough to meet water demand up to year 2004. Despite the magnitude of this source, however, approximately 300 MLD remains unmet for customers in the south of Metro Manila, primarily because of its distance from the central distribution system. Regrettably too, customers today already experience water deficiencies due to wastage and illegal use. The increasing population, which translates to bigger water consumption tends to further aggravate the need for additional water. "We have to strictly implement cost saving measures for the water we use." Engr. Hondrade emphasizes as he points out the importance of water as a precious commodity that must be conserved. "Clean water nowadays is becoming more and more expensive, especially that the same quality of water is what we use to drink, take a bath, flush the toilet, and even water the garden lawn. More efforts towards conservation thru reduced wastage must be implemented to reduce the costs of water to consumers."

According to Engineer Hondrade, there are currently four interim projects lined up for implementation to meet the near term requirement of Metro Manila. One said project is the Wawa River system which is immediately implementable and could easily generate an additional 50 mld to the existing supply. A resource which holds exciting promise as another possible source of water for Metropolitan Manila is the Laguna de Bay. Despite controversies which abound on this issue, particularly on the water's potability, the MWSS head says the water in the lake that is about 10 kilometers from Muntinlupa going east from the shore "is very good and clean."

"We are trying to convince the local officials of the towns around the lake that getting water from there will not affect the present condition of the lake itself," he said. He cites a study showing that abstracting water for residential purposes would have a minimal effect on the lake as initial draw down will only be 20 centimeters at the vicinity of Talim Island. This translates to only 2 millimeters will be abstracted daily and will therefore not greatly affect the livelihood of fisherfolks nor the residents in the environs of the lake.

Another advantage of tapping Laguna de Bay is its short distance away from Metropolitan Manila. "It's about 30 kilometers from Manila Bay," Engineer Hondrade adds. "The water quality is still good, only minimal level of salinity has been detected and therefore easier to treat for potability."

Because of the lake's distance, the current reservoirs including La Mesa Dam can still be used. The costs to tap the lake's potential will not be as enormous. Submarine cables can be constructed to transport the water from the lake to these reservoirs. In contrast, the Umiray-Angat Transbasin has been costly since it involved boring a large tunnel through a mountain, including its other civil works. It is also located hundreds of kilometers away from Manila. To sustain domestic requirements in the future would mean tapping other sources, like the Kanan-Kaliwa-Agos river basins which are farther east and are located in the provinces of Rizal and Quezon.

It is inevitable that unless action is undertaken, water will run in short supply. At least two reasons have been cited: the large loss of water (called non-revenue water, or NRW) due to inefficient distribution and illegal water tapping; and the considerable damage to the watersheds from where water is drawn.

Water loss, or NRW, from unrepaired pipes as well as those illegally tapped, says the MWSS head, can run to as much as 60 percent of that being distributed. He cites at least three damaged portions in the La Mesa Dam system and has promised to finish repair works in the aqueduct before February 16 this year.

The MWSS head believes that dialogues with people

WATER/p.B5

Administrator's Message

KAKA-IBA ang lagaslas ng tubig sa Carriedo Fountain sa loob ng MWSS compound. Mas masigla. Mas masaya. Mas buhay. Ang bawat patak ng tubig ay masiglang nagpupugay at bumabati - Happy Anniversary MWSS!

One hundred and twenty four years ago, Don Francisco Carriedo y Peredo donated P745,000 which was used to establish what is to become the oldest water system in Asia. Now, this water system is a multi-billion company serving almost ten million people - from just 300,000 then. Now, it supplies about 4,000 MLD, from just 15 MLD when it started. Tuwang tuwa at manghang mangha siguro si Don Francisco Carriedo ngayon sa kinahinatnan ng kanyang napakahalagang donasyon noong 1878.

The fact that MWSS has been able to effectively serve the water needs of Metropolitan Manila's growing population for the past 124 years speaks well of the success of this institution as a public service and of the quality of its management and workforce. The recent changes, particularly the privatization of parts of its operations, have managed to keep the agency on track with its mandate of service as we all begin to cope with the challenges of emerging global economy.

I congratulate the men and women of MWSS as well as the agency's partners in both the public and private sectors, particularly Maynilad Water and Manila Water, for having persevered in making what the MWSS has been and will be.

With foresight, perseverance and commitment, I believe that, with the full support of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Secretary Simeon Datumanong, the MWSS will be able to hurdle all challenges that comes its way and, in the process, deliver its mandate to effectively provide clean water at reasonable price to all people it serves.

ORLANDO C. HONDRADE

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Water . . .

From page B4

concerning this issue could help solve the water tapping problem. He mentions an area of informal settlers in Marikina as an example where illegal water tapping was stopped. Previously, "90 percent of the squatter residents in the area were illegal water users," he points out. After subsequent weekly dialogues that illegal tapping was eradicated and, as a result, all the residents were provided with their own faucets. They now pay P100 compared to the P600 they were charged before they resorted to illegal tapping.

On the watersheds, much concern has been raised on the continued degradation of the country's watersheds, including that of La Mesa Reservoir. The MWSS in partnership with the Bantay Kalikasan of the ABS-CBN Foundation is implementing a comprehensive plan that aims to arrest further degradation caused by illegal settlers, illegal gathering of forest products, timber poaching and quarrying. As a result, a massive reforestation program of the watershed plus stricter enforcement of environmental laws have been carried out.

As of January this year, 555 hectares of the 2,700-hectare La Mesa watershed were reforested. About 27 endemic Philippine tree species were planted. A 29-kilometer stretch of the watershed perimeter wall was repaired by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. This year, efforts are being made to raise 150,000 additional seedlings for planting in the watershed.

'WORK THAT GIVES LIFE'

A engineer's lifetime affair with water

ENGINEER Orlando C. Hondrade has dreamed of becoming the head of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) after having worked for the agency for over 25 years. It had appeared that he was nearing his dream when, in August 2001, he was named the agency's Deputy Administrator.

Come November of the same year, however, he was named Administrator of the Metropolitan Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), a position he holds now and which he intends to reciprocate with hard work and a burning desire to serve the people.

The MWSS administrator rose from the ranks at the NIA, after a few months serving as an engineer trainee at the Angat-Maasin Integrated Area Development Project. This stint appears as a starting point for a lifetime affair with water -- specifically water-related jobs. He was then recruited by the NIA in June 1976 where he stayed until his recent appointment as Administrator of MWSS in January 2002. .

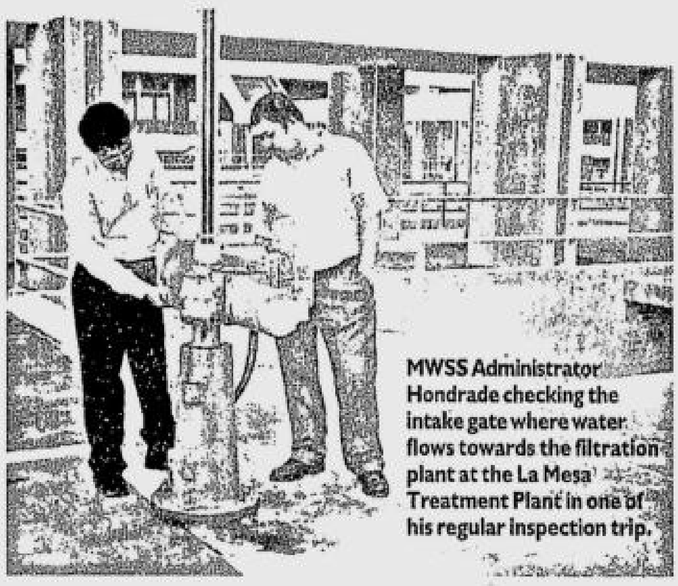
Symbolically, he compares his lifelong work with that of giving life, considering that water provides life to all living things. "Perhaps this is the life given to me, to serve the people by providing water. From the start of my career, I worked to provide water to the land. Today, I am working to provide water to people, particularly the consuming public in Metropolitan Manila," he said.

Maintaining professional relationships with colleagues as well as with people from other government and private agencies is Engineer Hondrade's working trademark. This has served him in good stead for it has made him several friends. In fact, in his many years working in Mindanao, he has befriended many Muslims through his forthrightness and honesty.

He has had a distinguished record at the NIA, where he was once called a "superboy" because of his rise through the ranks. His boss in 1977, he recalls, continues to hold his same position to this day. In 1985, he was recognized as a National Employee of the Year followed by several others including most outstanding irrigation superintendent for four consecutive years.

In 1995 and 1996, Engineer Hondrade was honored as the NIA's Regional Irrigation Manager of the Year. In 1997, he was named OIC-Assistant Administrator for Systems Operations and Equipment Management of the agency before his appointment as deputy administrator.

A graduate of Feati University, the MWSS head is married, although his entire family -- including his wife and five children, are all in the United States. This fact has not diminished his penchant for working in the country with a position he did not ask for and for a people who he feels deserve the better things in life, like clean water.



MWSS Administrator Hondrade checking the intake gate where water flows towards the filtration plant at the La Mesa Treatment Plant in one of his regular inspection trip.

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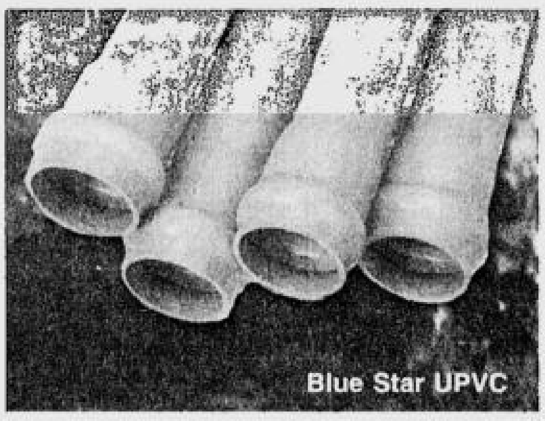

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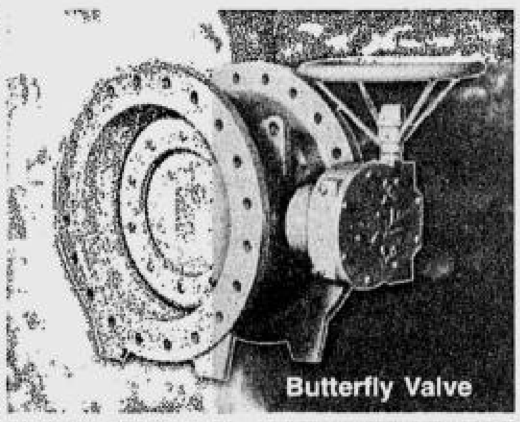
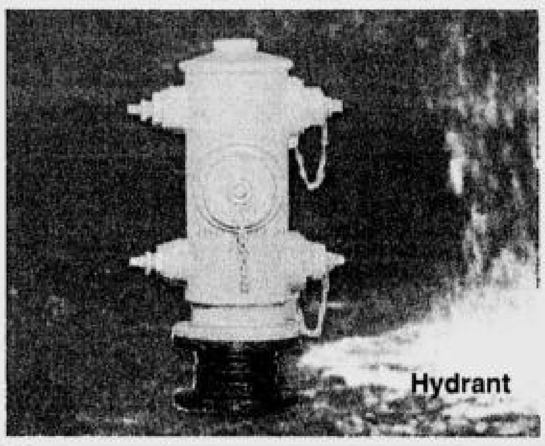
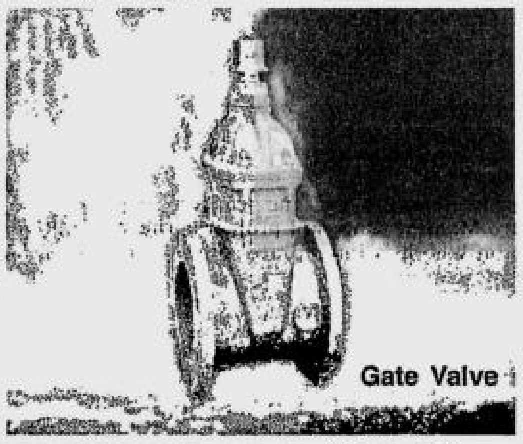


Butterfly Valve



Hydrant



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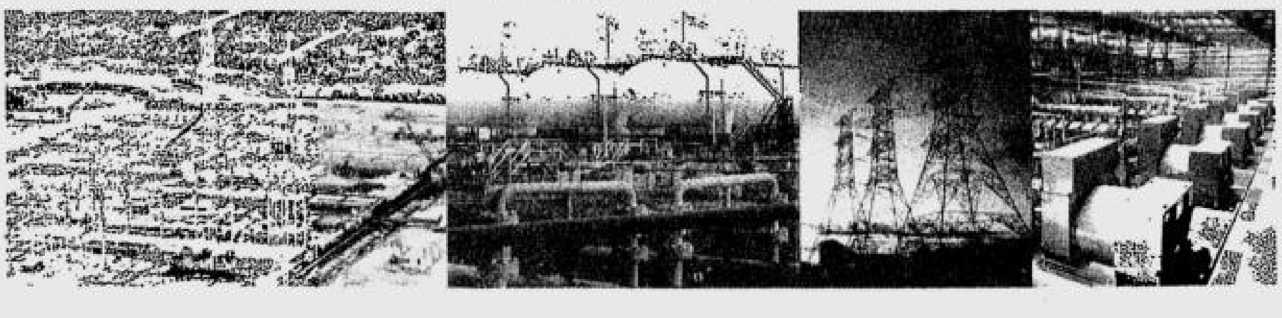

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PSE approves stock offering of Cebu-based power company

By Doris C. Dumlao

CEBU-BASED power firm Salcon Power Corp. will become the first company to conduct an initial public offering this year as the Philippine Stock Exchange approved its listing on the main PSE board on April 2.

In a circular to brokers yesterday, the PSE said Salcon Power would offer primary and secondary shares to the public equivalent to 20 percent of total shares at a price of P1.70 to P2.20 each.

A total of 313.9 million common shares split into primary and secondary shares out of about 1.57 billion in total shares will be offered to the public.

The book-building for the IPO, which will be arranged by ATR Kim-Eng Capital Partners Inc., will start this Feb. 21 while actual offering will begin on March 6.

Proceeds from Salcon Power's offering, which will amount to between P533.63 million and P690.58 million, will be used to partly finance its investments in the P1.4-billion Eight Islands Diesel Project to be implemented by wholly owned subsidiary Salcon Island Power Corp.

Salcon Power is majority owned by Salcon Philippines Inc., a 60-percent subsidiary of Singapore's Salcon Ltd., along with a consortium of foreign entities and local partners led by siblings Dennis and Larry Villareal, Alfredo Henares, Yolanda Martirez and Cora Gamez.

Salcon Power's flagship and initial venture in the Philippine power industry was the 203.8-megawatt Naga Power Plant Complex in Cebu which was bid out by state-controlled National Power Corp. in 1994 through a 15-year rehabilitation, operation, maintenance and management agreement.

Since then, the company has extended its participation in other power projects in the country such as its acquisition of the following:

o 40 percent of Mactan Electric Co., a power distribution franchise in Lapu-lapu City, Olango and Cordova in Mactan, Cebu;

o a 5-megawatt generating facility on Samal Island, Davao, under a joint venture with Davao del Norte Electric Cooperative, and

o the 29-megawatt Timbayan and 32-megawatt Villasiga hydroelectric power plants on Panay Island.

In February 2000, Salcon Power successfully bid for the installation of diesel engine-driven power plants with a combined capacity of 50 megawatts in eight islands in the country.

Salcon Power's Singaporean principal, aside from the development of power plants, is engaged in a wide range of industrial projects such as palm oil mills, liquid store tanks and water treatment plants. It also has investments in power generation and distribution, environmental engineering, and industrial and agro-industrial engineering.

Banks chide DTI chief for rate claims

From page B1

government's successful efforts to bring down its key borrowing rates and the inflation rate.

He said that based on the average 91-day treasury bill rate of 8.862 percent in December, banks should be charging no more than 13.862 percent on their loans. However, a government survey in the fourth quarter last year showed that Philippine firms were paying as much as 17 percent for their corporate loans during the period.

Banks have to charge higher interest rates for high-risk borrowers because they have to set aside a bigger part of their reserves to cover for the probability of loans turning sour. If banks are forced to keep a minimum lending rate, the source said they would have to cut down their savings deposit rates to compensate for the lower spreads.

Roxas met with top bank officials and industry group leaders Wednesday night to discuss the businessmen's complaints on "usurious" lending rates by banks amid declining interest rates.

Based on a statement from the Department of Trade and Industry, bankers in that meeting justified the current interest rate levels.

The bankers said the interest rate spreads provide the banks with a cushion to cope with the high level of non-performing loans in the post-crisis period.

They claimed that the recent decline in treasury bill rates have yet to be reflected in their current lending rates because they have not yet recovered from the financial meltdown in 1997.

The banks said that while they were aware of the government's desire to pump-prime the economy through more credit, they could not just open their checkbooks to small and medium enterprises since most of them have no audited financial statements.

Stocks hit . . .

From page B1

held firm after attempts to test it earlier in the month.

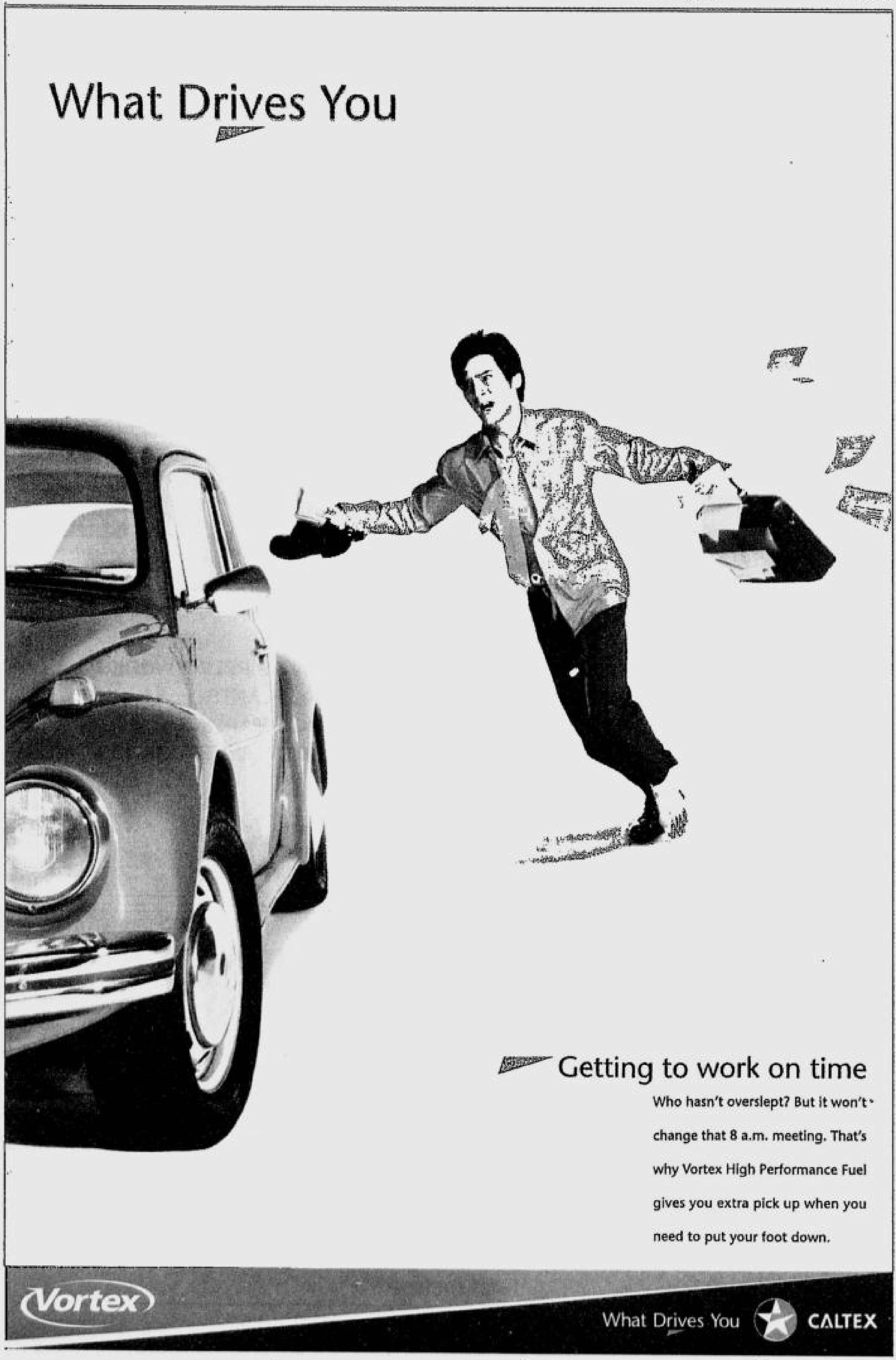
It was the highest closing level since ending at 1,410.07 points on June 29 last year.

Turnover also picked up, rising to P775.36 million from P555.33 million on Wednesday.

"I think everybody was expecting the central bank to announce a rate cut today and that has been a positive for the market, pretty much across the board," United Coconut Planters Bank Trust fund manager Vanessa Lim said.

Government remarks on Wednesday that it may set more ambitious economic targets for 2002 because of signs of a quicker-than-expected recovery also underpinned the market gains.

Reuters



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BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3	21,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	67.5	67.5	67	67	612,800
Citystate Savings Bank	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	2,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	29.5	29.5	29	29	302,800
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	212	212	209	209	31,000
Philippine National Bank	77	77	76.5	77	3,800
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13	13.25	13	13.25	18,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	19.25	20	19.25	19.5	168,000
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Bankard Inc.	1.3	1.32	1.3	1.3	200,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	200,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1350	1355	1350	1355	2,210
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1040	1045	1040	1045	1,270
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	31	31	30.5	30.5	60,400
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.67	0.72	0.67	0.68	17,780,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	770	775	770	775	15,870
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.038	0.044	0.038	0.043	45,000,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	100,000
Piltel	0.59	0.62	0.57	0.57	32,090,000
Phil. Telegraph & Tel. Co.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	30,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	520	525	510	510	45,890
Ivantage Corp.	0.55	0.57	0.55	0.57	1,470,000
Philweb.Com Inc.	0.022	0.023	0.022	0.022	171,400,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	29	30.5	29	30	216,100
Manila Electric Co. B	41.5	42.5	41	42.5	1,667,800
Petron Corp.	1.94	2	1.94	1.94	19,832,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.97	0.97	0.96	0.96	300,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.1	3.15	3.05	3.05	2,866,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.34	0.37	0.34	0.37	590,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	530,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	91,000
Union Cement Corp.	0.67	0.71	0.67	0.68	20,300,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	7,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6	10,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	14.75	14.75	14.5	14.5	640,900
La Tondena Distillers Inc.	23.5	24	23.5	23.75	321,500
RFM Corp.	1.44	1.46	1.4	1.4	1,473,000
San Miguel Corp. A	49	50.5	49	50.5	549,800
San Miguel Corp. B	65	69	65	68	474,200
Universal Robina Corp.	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	10,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.66	0.69	0.66	0.68	70,000
Ayala Corp.	6.5	6.7	6.5	6.6	4,143,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	1.92	1.92	1.9	1.9	746,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	260,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	30,000
APC Group Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	100,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.008	73,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.29	1,350,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	25,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	20,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	10.5	10	10.5	11,600
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	500,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.8	0.83	0.8	0.81	44,590,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.18	0.185	0.17	0.17	1,950,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.4	0.41	0.4	0.41	100,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	500,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.37	0.38	0.36	0.36	16,660,000
Ebecom Holdings Inc.	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	1,100,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.02	1.02	1,053,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	30.5	31	30.5	30.5	369,700
Global Equities Inc.	0.18	0.19	0.18	0.185	1,560,000
Ionics Inc.	8.6	8.7	8.6	8.6	56,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.88	1.88	617,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.4	1.44	1.4	1.4	819,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	1,000,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	300,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.88	0.9	0.86	0.86	1,640,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.39	0.39	0.37	0.38	13,980,000
Music Corp.	0.33	0.37	0.31	0.35	10,780,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.22	0.23	0.22	0.22	3,170,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.86	0.86	0.83	0.83	300,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.39	0.41	0.38	0.38	1,370,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	1,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	100,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.175	0.185	0.175	0.175	830,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	360,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.32	100,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings-B	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	10,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	10,000
Pryce Corp.	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.09	9,000,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	15	15.25	14.75	14.75	152,500
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Belle Corp.	0.45	0.46	0.45	0.45	2,840,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	30,000
Mondragon Intl Phils Inc.	0.45	0.46	0.45	0.46	510,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.25	0.28	0.25	0.28	300,000
Philippine Racing Club	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	15,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	31	31	30	30	2,100,100
DMCI Holdings Inc.- Pref.	780	780	780	780	150
Equitable PCI Bank-War	1.72	1.72	1.7	1.72	86,000
Globe Telecom Hldg (Pdr)	760	765	755	755	2,680
Jollibee Warrants	13.75	13.75	13.75	13.75	2,000
Omico Corp. Warrant	0.0014	0.0014	0.0014	0.0014	120,000,000
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	900
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	900
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	300
Philweb.Com Inc. -Warrants	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	6,000,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6.6	6.7	6.6	6.7	20,625,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	100,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	5,280,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.56	0.58	0.52	0.52	37,080,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.33	0.34	0.32	0.33	5,220,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	2.18	2.2	2.08	2.08	14,319,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.29	0.29	1,800,000
Primetown Property Group	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.47	170,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.78	1.78	65,000
SM Development Corp.	0.97	1	0.97	1	2,060,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.7	6.8	6.6	6.7	6,002,000
Urbancorp Realty Dev. Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	100,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	1,000,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.84	1.84	1.84	1.84	20,000
Itogon-Suyoc Mines A	0.042	0.042	0.039	0.04	70,400,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	510,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.225	2,940,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0044	0.0046	0.0044	0.0046	8,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0044	0.0046	0.0044	0.0046	69,000,000
Polar Mines & Dev't Corp.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	3,500,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.27	950,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	650,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.02	0.022	0.02	0.021	4,700,000
Interport Res. B	0.0042	0.0042	0.0042	0.0042	1,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.007	0.0065	0.007	166,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.007	0.007	0.0065	0.007	61,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	750,000
Pacifica	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	3,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	100,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.27	0.28	0.26	0.27	2,780,000

DISCLOSURES

LANDOIL Resources Corp. announced that effective Feb. 15, its new transfer agent is **Securities Transfer Services Inc.**

* * *

CITYLAND Development Corp. reduced its listed shares by 68,070,530 common shares representing the unissued but listed shares. The total number of listed shares will now be 659,527,141 common shares.

* * *

RIZAL Commercial Banking Corp. will be the new stock and transfer agent of **Basic Consolidated Inc.** starting Feb. 16.

* * *

SALCON Power Corp. announced that the investors' briefing on the initial public offering of the company is set on Feb. 19 at 2:30 p.m. at the Makati Shangri-la Hotel (Makati Rooms A and B).

Compiled by Ray Leyesa, PDI Research

Metrobank OKs Reynolds' debt restructuring program

By Doris C. Dumlao

CASH-strapped aluminum maker Reynolds Philippines Corp. has secured the approval of 67 percent of its creditor-banks for the restructuring of its debts worth P2.4 billion through a scheme that would give the creditors the option to take over a majority stake in the company.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, RPC information officer Maria Olivia Yabut-Misa said Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., the company's second biggest creditor, had approved the rehabilitation plan. Two other creditor-banks, Land Bank of the Philippines and AsiaTrust Bank, approved the plan earlier.

"With the recent development, the company and Penta Capital Investment Corp. (RPC's financial advisor) are optimistic that the execution of the restructuring agreement will be concluded within the next 60 days," Yabut-Misa said.

The plan approved by the banks called for the restructuring of secured RPC loans into seven-year zero notes with a two-year grace period.

The unsecured loans will be converted into preferred shares that may be exchanged for common shares. This will give the creditors an exit mechanism through the stock market.

"These schemes aim to transform the company into a new entity with a drastically reduced debt load and with the majority ownership held by banks," she said.

The company said the signing of the restructuring agreement would enable the company to raise around P400 million in last-in-first-out (LIFO) funds to finance the importation of raw materials and working capital requirements.

Based on projections, Yabut-Misa said RPC would soon start posting strong cash flows and steady profits.

"These will be given back to creditor-banks by way of an earnings recapture clause," she said.

"In addition, common stocks may be sold anytime when the market prices become favorable. The company's creditor-banks can, therefore, look forward to an early exit instead of waiting for the entire restructuring program to run its full course," she explained.

A nine-member management committee was created by the RPC board last October to review and implement the restructuring plan as well as the company's business plans and programs, capital expenditures and projects. Land Bank, being the biggest creditor, was given six of the nine seats in the committee.

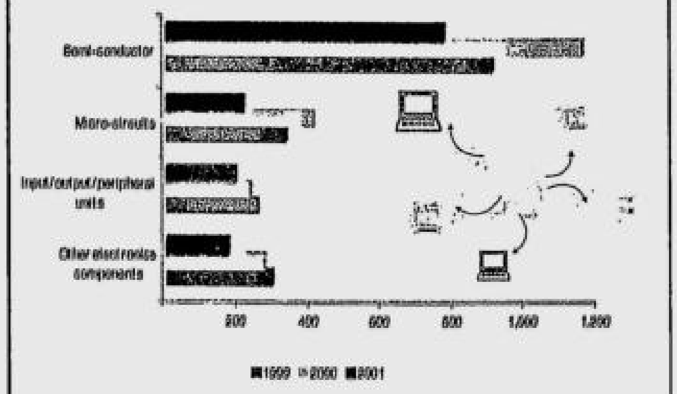
RPC was established in 1954 by Reynolds International Inc. of the United States. It manufactures and distributes aluminum sheets, foil and extruded sections used in the packaging, container, construction, appliance manufacturing and vehicle manufacturing industries.

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Exports of electronic components

(December 1999, 2000 & 2001, in $ millions)



Source: NSO

ELECTRONIC components remained the Philippines' top export in December last year although total receipts fell by 34.6 percent to $1.36 million from the previous year's level. Semi-conductors made up for 26 percent of total exports but this segment registered a year-on-year decline of 33.1 percent. The biggest decline was in micro-circuits which fell by 47.4 percent.

Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research

StanChart to issue ₱3B in long-term IOUs

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE MONETARY Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has approved the application of Standard Chartered Bank to issue P3 billion worth of long-term certificates of deposits.

The UK-based universal bank said it wanted to raise new funds to finance a more aggressive consumer-lending program.

StanChart tapped Banco Santander to arrange the issuance of the certificates of deposits since central bank rules prohibit a bank to arrange the issuance of its own deposit certificates.

StanChart's certificates of deposits will mature in five years and one day.

BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said the approval was in line with the thrust of the central bank to encourage banks to offer new products that would bring them additional revenues.

StanChart is the first foreign bank that set up operations in the country and the second oldest operating bank next to Bank of the Philippine Islands.

To encourage banks to issue long-term types of deposits and help develop a secondary market for debt and deposit notes, the BSP reduced last year the reserve requirement for these instruments to 2 percent from 20 percent.

Only banks that meet the minimum capital requirement, risk adequacy ratio, provision for losses, and other standards of financial health are allowed to issue these certificates of deposits. These debt papers can be sold to retail investors.

Qualified banks can issue deposit certificates up to three times the size of its capital in weekly or monthly tranches of P5 billion.

The problem, said a bank analyst, is the lack of impetus for a secondary market to grow and flourish. A secondary market is necessary for long-term deposits to be attractive since the certificates can be bought or sold even before maturity.

The new BSP policy will make banks more liquid. Banks can use the additional liquidity for investment in government securities since credit demand has yet to pick up.

With more money to park in government debt notes, there will be more room for Treasury bill rates to further drop. When this happens, bank lending rates should also follow, said a bank analyst.

Land Bank income hits ₱1.5B

By Christine A. Gaylican

LAND Bank of the Philippines has reported a three-fold increase in its net income last year to P1.5 billion mainly due to higher earnings from investments.

This was a reversal of the three-year downtrend in the bank's earnings, bank president and chief executive Gary B. Teves said in a news briefing Wednesday night.

"The growth in our net income was driven by the 18.9-percent increase in our gross revenues from P16.8 billion in 2000 to P20 billion last year. Our income from investments in government securities and some blue chips grew by 56 percent to P7 billion from P2.4 billion," Teves noted.

As a government-owned financial institution, LBP is mandated to remit 50 percent of its net income to the national government in the form of cash dividends.

However, LBP has asked the Department of Finance to lower its required dividend remittance to the national government since Congress shaved off some P600 million from its budget this year.

Teves said LBP's budget to accomplish its mandate to finance land for distribution to farmers was short by P600 million this year. He said the bank would shoulder the budget shortfall.

He said LBP had proposed to reduce its remittance to the government to P200 million in cash dividends and to P500 million for the stock dividends.

For this year, LBP expects its loan portfolio to remain at P104 billion as it plans to minimize its investments in government securities and increase its exposure to agriculture-related projects.

"This is a step that will hopefully bring us closer to transforming the bank's loan portfolio for agriculture-related activities to a high of 65 percent by year 2004. Our present exposure to the sector is only at 38 percent," added Teves.

Universal Robina posts 21.6% sales growth

By Elena R. Torrijos

UNIVERSAL Robina Corp., the food arm of the Gokongwei family, posted a 21.65-percent increase in consolidated net sales in the fourth quarter of last year or the first quarter of its fiscal year to P5.54 billion from previous year's level.

Net income for the period jumped 17.24 percent to P404.37 million from P344.92 million.

URC said the increase in revenue came-from a sustained consumer demand for its branded consumer foods complemented by the consistent performance of its regional operations in Southeast Asia and China.

In addition, the company said it enjoyed remarkable growth in its commodity business operations as a result of higher sales of flour and sugar.

In another development, Robinsons Land Corp., the Gokongwei's property arm, recorded a 30.53-percent decline in net income to P196.52 million in the last quarter of 2001 from year-ago level of P282.89 million.

Gross revenue likewise fell 12.89 percent to P779.29 million from P894.60 million. This was attributed to lower revenue registered by RLC's hotel division and housing and land development division.

The company's high-rise buildings division, for its part, realized a 54-percent increase in gross revenue to P119.8 million.

The group is expected to launch two new residential condominium projects in the coming fiscal year.

The commercial centers division enjoyed a 23.27-percent rise in revenue because of improvement in the rental of the company's existing malls and the excellent take-up rate registered by new malls that were completed late fiscal year.

RLC projected that revenues would increase further this fiscal year with the recent opening of Robinsons Place in Iloilo and Starmills, Pampanga.

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US consumers hit malls, outlook brightens

WASHINGTON—Consumers are powering the US economy out of recession, experts said Wednesday, as government data showed people hit the shopping malls in January despite deserting car showrooms.

"Consumers continued to visit the malls at an awesome pace and once manufacturers start to get it, this economy may really take off," said Naroff Economic Advisors president Joel Naroff.

In fact, overall US retail sales slipped 0.2 percent in January from the previous month, when they had climbed 0.2 percent. But the figure was dragged down by a weak auto sector as special financing offers for car buyers came to an end.

Car sales have been falling from a peak reached in October when auto dealerships launched zero-percent financing offers to entice buyers after the shock of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

In January, auto dealership sales tumbled 4.3 percent.

"January was payback time for the zero percent financing deals and motor vehicle demand cratered," Naroff said.

"But the true picture can be seen in the sales figures that exclude autos. Here we see that households went wild. Sales soared and they were in almost every category.

Excluding auto sales, retail sales surged 1.2 percent, the largest gain since March 2000.

Wall Street rallied on the news. The blue Dow Jones industrials average climbed 112.85 points, or 1.14 percent, to 9,976.59 in the first 90 minutes of trade.

The Commerce Department figures showed retail sales improving in most categories.

Sales at gasoline stations climbed 5.1 percent in January, the biggest rise in 23 months, building material sales advanced 2.9 percent, department store sales gained 2.0 percent and sporting goods store sales rose 0.8 percent.

Clothing store sales increased 2.5 percent and furniture sales edged up 0.4 percent.

Sales of electronics and appliances slumped a record 3.6 percent, however. And income at restaurants and bars lost declined 2.0 percent following the festivities in December.

"The New Year got off to a roaring start," said Merrill Lynch economist Stan Shipley.

Real consumer spending, which accounts for two-thirds of US economic activity, would likely be revised sharply upwards in the fourth quarter, Shipley said.

Spending in the first quarter of 2002 would rise at about 2 percent, he forecast.

But businesses would meet some of the new demand by further cutting into their rapidly depleting inventories, he forecast.

"The only question is when will shelves be so bare that they have to be restocked?" Naroff said.

"When that happens, and it should be pretty soon, orders will rise and yes, even manufacturing production could pick up," he added. *Reuters*

HP profit beats raised forecast

SAN FRANCISCO—Hewlett-Packard Co. on Wednesday reported first-quarter profits above Wall Street expectations it had raised last week, as consumers snapped up personal computers and printers.

The Palo Alto, California-based company said the results proved management's case it could successfully integrate takeover target Compaq Computer Corp., but it tempered expectations for the current quarter, saying consumer spending could slow and earnings would fall slightly.

HP posted a net profit of $484 million, or 25 cents per diluted share, for the first quarter ended Jan. 31, up from $141 million, or 7 cents per share, in the year-earlier quarter.

Excluding one-time items and accounting adjustments, HP posted a profit of $564 million, or 29 cents per diluted share, compared with $812 million, or 41 cents per share, in the year-ago quarter.

Sales fell to $11.4 billion from $12.4 billion in the year-earlier quarter.

Analysts polled by research firm Thomson Financial/First Call had forecast operating earnings of 18 cents to 27 cents per share on sales of $11.1 billion. On Feb. 4, HP said it would substantially beat the existing consensus of 16 cents per share. *Reuters*

Japan's CA surplus rises 42% in Dec.

TOKYO—Japan's current account surplus in December rose 42 percent from a year earlier to 971.8 billion yen ($7.3 billion), the finance ministry said Thursday.

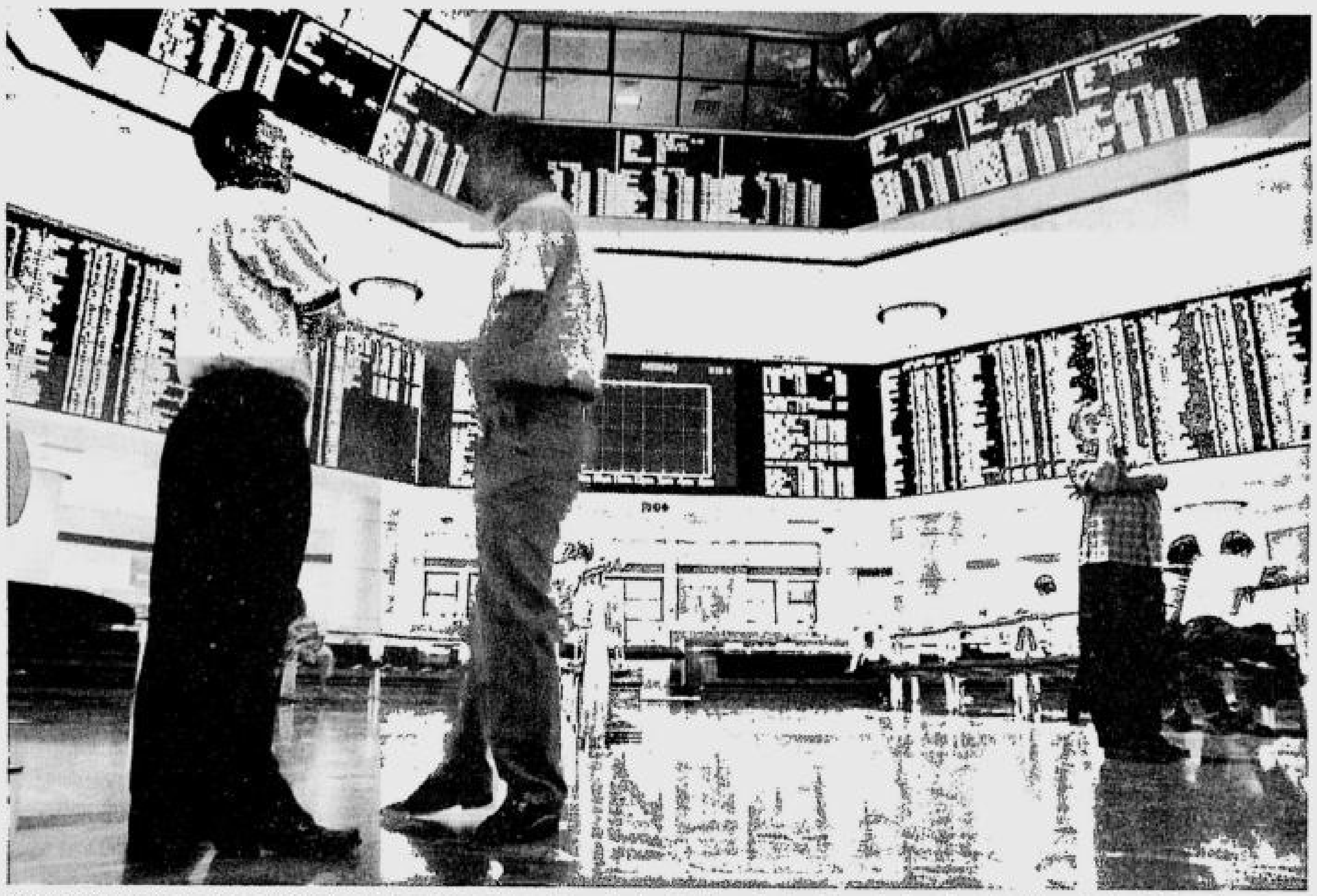
The December current account data included a 429.8-billion-yen surplus in the trade of goods and services, 635.9 billion yen in investment income and a deficit of 93.9 billion yen in monetary transfers, the ministry said.

The surplus in goods trade alone dropped 18.4 percent to 811.8 billion yen, with exports falling 15.7 percent to 3,747.4 billion yen and imports down 15 percent at 2,935.6 billion yen.

The current account surplus measures the flow of goods, services and investment income, and other financial transfers.

On the year, Japan's current account fell 12 percent to 11,063.3 billion yen, comprising a 3,205.9 billion yen surplus in the trade of goods and services, 8.825 trillion yen in investment income and a deficit of 968.5 billion yen in monetary transfers.

The surplus in the goods trade alone dropped 32.2 percent on the year to 8.521 trillion yen, with exports falling 5.9 percent to 46.583 trillion yen and imports rising 3 percent to 38.062 trillion yen. *AFP*



CHINESE investors chat as they study the shares index at a private stock market gallery during the third day of the Chinese Lunar New Year in Kuala Lumpur. Share prices on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange were mixed at midday. AP

Aussie labor market adds 100,000 jobs

SYDNEY—Australia's labor market added more than 100,000 new jobs in January, close to a record, but analysts cautioned while employment had undoubtedly strengthened there were questions over the size of the increase.

The rise in employment was 10 times larger than the median forecast of a 10,000 increase, and may help to allay Reserve Bank fears that a subdued labor market could weigh on resilient consumer spending.

However, the Bureau of Statistics itself mentioned special factors that economists said could have skewed the data higher.

"The fact is the Australian economy is just not big enough or strong enough to generate jobs at that sort of pace," said Commonwealth Bank chief economist Michael Blythe.

The jump in what is often a volatile release slammed the bond market sharply lower on fears that a hike in interest rates could be brought forward, though economists said this was unlikely because of the doubts about seasonal factors in the data. *Reuters*

Job cuts may not be final word from British Airways

LONDON—Europe's biggest airline is laying off almost a quarter of its workforce to cut costs and revive profits, but there are suspicions that heavily indebted British Airways has still not done enough to secure its future.

The company, which is heading toward its biggest ever loss since privatization 15 years ago, announced another 5,800 job cuts on Wednesday, taking total layoffs to 13,000 since the Sept. 11 attacks on US cities put BA into a tailspin.

The layoffs, coupled with more surgery to BA's short-haul operations, aim to slash 650 million pounds ($933 million) in annual costs and put the airline's operations into the black.

At least one major shareholder applauded the moves on Wednesday, but they were still not enough to silence BA's critics and the company's punch-drunk stock slipped 2 percent.

"They have to rethink their whole strategy in Europe," Rigas Doganis, a former airline chief who is now a visiting industry professor at England's Cranfield University, told Reuters.

A second analyst said the cuts were not deep enough after the collapse last month of BA's proposed joint venture with American Airlines on nine transatlantic routes.

"It does appear, given the totality of the issues they face now with the collapse of AA talks, it is just not enough," said the analyst, who asked not to be named.

Other analysts said the prospect of taking on the muscle of the trade unions could have held back the company from making more radical changes, which would involve more staff cuts and changing workers' conditions on European short-haul routes.

For the current slump in demand on transatlantic routes, normally BA's biggest profit-maker, has only served to highlight the fact that BA has been making losses on its regional European operation for years and Doganis said he doubted whether BA should go on serving both the short-haul and long-haul markets.

"They potentially can become a very profitable operation but I think they need more drastic surgery in Europe," Doganis said after BA unveiled its blueprint.

"Perhaps they should concentrate more on being a point-to-point long-haul carrier," added Doganis, who was chief executive of Olympic Airways in the mid 1990s.

"The long-haul business will gradually come back over time but it (BA) has been losing money hand over fist for the last four years in the European network, and I don't think what they are currently doing will resolve that problem in Europe." *Reuters*

BRITISH Airways aircraft are parked at London Heathrow's terminal 4. British Airways announced Wednesday that it was cutting 5,800 jobs amounting to 11.7 percent of its workforce. AP

Enron sparks soul-searching at accounting schools

NEW YORK—The Enron scandal that's already rocked Wall Street and the accounting profession is now causing the ivory towers of academia to sway.

The alleged questionable accounting that spurred Enron Corp.'s collapse and landed its auditor Andersen in the midst of a huge controversy is also leading to a period of soul-searching at the universities that train number crunchers.

Professors say they have already started to adjust their courses to address multiple questions about accounting practices and ethics issues arising from Enron's downfall. The changes are certain to accelerate when regulators and the accounting profession introduce much-anticipated reforms.

"There is going to be a change," said Michael Granof, professor of accounting at the University of Texas at Austin. "Suddenly accounting professors are aware that accounting is no longer accurate and reliable."

"Accounting professors can no longer get away with just talking about the current model as being the only model without recognizing its flaws. You can't get away with that anymore—the students are going to be so cynical," said Granof.

The links between the classroom and the Enron scandal are more than academic.

Robert Jaedicke, professor emeritus of accounting at Stanford University, served on Enron's board at the time of its collapse and William C. Powers Jr., dean of the University of Texas School of Law has since joined.

Moreover, prominent accounting firms, including Andersen, recruit heavily from accounting programs and business schools, often contributing money and endowing professorships.

Many accounting teachers are already using Enron as an example of improper accounting practices and of ethical dilemmas.

"I can't avoid, nor do I want to, many illustrations and examples (from the Enron scandal). There's so many reporting issues involved with Enron that I'm just naturally incorporating these illustrations through the semester," said Paul Brown, chair of the accounting department at New York University's Stern School of Business.

The most immediate effects are being felt in the teaching of financial statement analysis and ethics, said professors.

"Particularly for financial statement analysis it's very important," said John Hand, professor of accounting at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Hand said accounting students would be taught "a greater skepticism to dig down much further into financial statements to see what is really going on and scrutinize the disclosures with a more skeptical eye than in the past." *Reuters*

Nissan says it will rehire ex-employees

TOKYO—Japan's Nissan Motor Co. Ltd. said Thursday it would start rehiring employees it had laid off as part of a drastic restructuring plan, as the automaker boosts its domestic operations.

"We plan to add another 1,000 hires going forward, the workers will meet the specific needs of the departments," said a Nissan spokesperson.

They would be engaged in areas such as technology and engineering, he said.

"We do expect applications from former Nissan employees. We will consider all qualifications, but being a former Nissan employee is a strong qualification."

The hiring will start from April, and will also include about 500 university graduates—about the same number as last year.

In the year to March 2002, Nissan would have already hired about 1,000 staff but the same focus was not attached to former workers, said the spokesperson, adding that employees who left through an early retirement scheme offered by the company would not be eligible for re-employment.

Nissan's revival plan was launched in October 1999, months after French carmaker Renault took a 36.8-percent controlling stake in Japan's second-ranked auto company. *AFP*

Honda is top of the pops, but has it reached its peak?

TOKYO—Record profits, a string of innovative vehicles boosting sales and a strong brand name that means little need to discount—Honda Motor Co. is winning plaudits all round.

Among a dismal shower of results and forecasts, with losses cascading through much of corporate Japan, Japan's second largest automaker has little trouble standing out in the crowd.

Just how comfortable is Honda?

It can afford to knock back some of the huge windfall gains the yen's recent decline would bring, with company president Hiroyuki Yoshino saying this month he thought the yen had fallen too far at 134 to the dollar.

Instead, Yoshino complained about how difficult it was to plan new factories or expand current facilities overseas, given that continued yen weakness might mean exports from Japan would work out cheaper.

With much of the world's auto industry closing plants or talking of the need to do so—the most recent example being Ford Motor Co.'s planned shuttering of at least five North American assembly plants—it is an enviable position to be in.

But Honda's raft of new vehicles—the Step Wgn minivan, the small Stream minivan, its hot-selling Fit subcompact, the Pilot sports-utility and planned Model X SUV—is also sparking worries that the automaker is at a peak in its product cycle.

"I think we are at the peak and that Honda's vehicles are going to get less interesting from here on," said Seiji Sugiura, an auto analyst at Nomura Securities.

Just two years ago, rival Toyota Motor Corp. was the toast of the town with the advent of its Vitz subcompact, a runaway hit, and the family of cars based around it, including the bB small van and FunCargo, a youth-oriented hatchback.

After drubbing the domestic competition with that series, its 2001 offerings—mainly remodeled sedans—failed to excite.

Last year, Toyota's Japan sales of ordinary vehicles, which excludes 660cc mini-vehicles, slid 3 percent. Honda jumped 23 percent. Globally, Honda's sales rose 5 percent while Toyota, excluding medium to heavy trucks, nudged up 1.2 percent.

Some analysts are worried the same product lull may befall Honda, but Yoshino is unconcerned. "Not worried at all," he told reporters last week.

The company would be launching at least as many vehicles as last year, he added, although he declined to be drawn on whether he thought they would sell as strongly. "There will always be hit cars and non-hit cars," he said. *Reuters*

Creditors expected to approve NSC bailout

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE MACAPAGAL administration yesterday expressed confidence that Philippine creditor banks would agree to a debt write-down and conversion plan for National Steel Corp. which would give them majority control of the shuttered Iligan-based steel company.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II said he expected the consortium of Philippine banks to approve next week the "permanent solution" to NSC's problem. The approved solution will be forwarded to Pengurusan Danaharta Nasional Bhd., Malaysia's debt rehabilitation agency that earlier took over the Malaysian interests in NSC.

"The plan calls for the banks to write off part of their debts while converting some into equity and Danaharta will dilute its 82 percent holdings in NSC. Everyone will have to get their haircuts," Roxas said. "The target is to have a nearly-debt-free NSC."

Roxas said it was important to get the consensus of the creditor banks because even a bank with the least exposure to NSC could derail the debt write-down and conversion plan.

But Roxas said early indications showed a favorable reaction to the plan. "The banks and Danaharta seem to favor this route so we are giving it as much support and leeway."

NSC owes roughly P16 billion to 14 Philippines banks and financial institutions such as Philippine National Bank, Allied Banking Corp., Land Bank of the Philippines, United Overseas Bank Philippines, Global Banking Corp., Bank of Commerce, China Banking Corp., Equitable-PCIBank, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., Traders Royal Bank, United Coconut Planters Bank, Urban Bank, Credit Agricole Indosuez, and Wise Citco.

Danaharta took over the 3 billion ringgit loan of Hong Kong's Hottick Investments Co. from Malayan Banking, RHB Bank, Bank Bumiputra and Commerce Assetholding Bhd.

Hottick, which is largely owned by Malaysia's Renong Bhd., took control of NSC when it bailed out in 1997 the Westmont group, the Malaysian investors that won in the privatization of NSC.

Roxas said Danaharta was likely to retain the veto power or at least 33-percent interest in NSC which meant that banks would get more than 50 percent. The combined 17.5-percent stake of National Development Co. and Marubeni Corp. will likely be reduced to 6 percent.

Roxas said the process of picking a temporary leaseholder for NSC—which has been idle for two years—has been on hold considering that both the banks and Danaharta were part of the evaluation committee reviewing the offers of Cathay Pacific Steel Co., Allengoal Steel Fabrication Inc., and Voest Alpine.

Petronas seen buying 20% of naphtha project

MALAYSIAN oil giant Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) is expected to finalize soon its participation in the $600-million naphtha cracker project in Bataan.

Sources from state-firm Philippine National Oil Co. said Petronas officials were expected to arrive late this month or in early March to firm up the details of its participation in the project.

Petronas, according to sources, is keen on acquiring a 20-percent stake in the naphtha cracker project. This will entail an investment of $60 million in the project.

The amount was based on a 50-50 debt-to-equity ratio, which, PNOC president Thelmo Cunanan said, was what PNOC preferred.

Sources said a joint committee had been formed to conduct in-depth studies on the project and to review the Philippines' petrochemical industry plan.

In an interview last month, Cunanan said PNOC would be shelling out $100 million mostly from its internal funds to secure a 34-percent equity in the project. PNOC plans to tap other financing sources if its funds will fall short of the requirement.

Cunanan said he was confident PNOC would achieve its target of having the naphtha cracker on stream in late 2005 or early 2006.

"We expect to sign a joint venture agreement by the third quarter if not in the middle of this year," the PNOC chief said.

Cunanan said there were a lot of serious petrochemical industry players interested to take part in the project.

He said some of them wanted to invest in equity while others wanted to supply the naphtha or to buy the by-products of the plant.

The cracker will produce monomers, the materials needed to make plastic resins.

Ronnel W. Domingo

Gov't eyes concession contract for Transco

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT has chosen to privatize the National Transmission Corp. through a concession contract instead of an outright sale.

Edgardo del Fonso, president of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp., said yesterday that the concession contract would be good for 25 years, with an option to renew for another 25 years.

"Such an agreement would have provisions for the concessionaire to upgrade and rehabilitate the system," Del Fonso explained.

He said Psalm was prepared to bid for the contract as soon as the implementing rules of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act are approved.

"I think (the Joint Congressional Power Commission) would pass it within this month," Del Fonso said.

He did not say how the decision would affect projected revenues following the privatization of Transco.

A source from Transco said that the government would lose management of the firm under the concession agreement, but would keep ownership of its assets.

"A concession could be more attractive to investors as this poses less risks for them," he said.

Energy Secretary Vicente Perez Jr. said in an earlier interview that the Transco was worth around $2 billion.

"This was based on a comparative analysis of valuations of other transmission systems in Asia and the rest of the world," Perez said.

The secretary added that at least two European companies, the United Kingdom's National Grid and Spain's Red Electrica, have signified interest to bid for Transco during a recently concluded premarketing roadshow.

Perez also said the government was set to embark on a follow-up roadshow. The agenda of the roadshow would be expanded to include the sale of the state-run National Power Corp.'s generating assets.

"We hope to do a second roadshow by the end of this month," Perez said.

Del Fonso said the roadshow team would do a round of the Asian market, especially Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia.

"This would be the initial 'sortie' for (Napocor's) generating companies," Del Fonso said.

The government planned to have Transco privatized by June, which Perez admitted was an ambitious target considering that the conditions for the privatization of Transco have yet to be met.

These include the approval of Napocor's privatization plan and the approval of a transmission system development plan.

GOINGS-ON

Retailing seminar

THE PHILIPPINE Retailers Association, the national organization of retailers in the country, and Deloitte Consulting (Singapore), a global leader in the consumer and retail industry consulting business, will jointly present to local retailers on Feb. 25, 1-4 p.m. at the Garden Ballroom, Edsa Shangri-La Hotel, the latest on "Global Powers of Retailing 2002: Benchmarking with the Best."

David Boden, an international retail expert and Deloitte Consulting's retail industry head, will tackle the facts and figures of the world's Top 200 retailers based on a joint research conducted by retail consulting firms Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, Deloitte Consulting, the US National Retail Federation and Stores Magazine.

The seminar aims to equip local retailers with global and regional industry trends including major market shifts, technology and e-commerce, market sizes country and by percentage as well as vital statistics on and countries of operations of the Top 200 global retailers.

RP hosts IPR meet

THE PHILIPPINE Intellectual Property Office (IPO) will host the 2nd Asia-Pacific Roundtable Meeting of the Heads of Intellectual Property on Feb. 18 to 20 at the Edsa Shangri-La Hotel.

The three-day meeting aims to provide a forum for high-level discussions on emerging issues, including strategic and management issues influencing the evolution of intellectual property offices in Asia and the Pacific. It will also tackle the impact on the developmental role of intellectual property especially in small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

IPO director general Emma C. Francisco said IPO's hosting of the meeting is in line with the Macapagal administration's thrust to make the country an active player in the intellectual property system.

Business strategy forum

LEADING Asian and US experts on economics as well as politics and security will gather at a business-strategy forum in Manila on March 5 to 7 to discuss the changing global and regional environments since Sept. 11.

Roberto de Ocampo, president of the Asian Institute of Management, said the forum was timely and unique because it would tackle all aspects of the economic environment—politics and security, energy, the future of the multilateral trading system, accomplishments since the Asian economic crisis and the setbacks since Sept. 11.

De Ocampo, a former finance secretary, said the 2nd Asia Pacific Executive Forum would also look at the prospects for the US economy and their implications to the region.

Asia's most admired firms

FOR the sixth straight year, Globe Telecom was again included among the most admired companies in Asia last year.

This was revealed in the Asia's Most Admired Companies survey which appeared in the November 2001 issue of the international business magazine Asian Business.

Globe Telecom placed 31st among the Top 147 companies that figured in the Asian Business survey. Also included in the list of the most admired companies were Globe Telecom's parent company Ayala Corp., which ranked 9th, and Singapore Telecom, the parent company of Globe's foreign partner Singapore Telecom International, which ranked 49th.

Globe Telecom ranked 3rd among the Top 10 telecom/media companies in the region.

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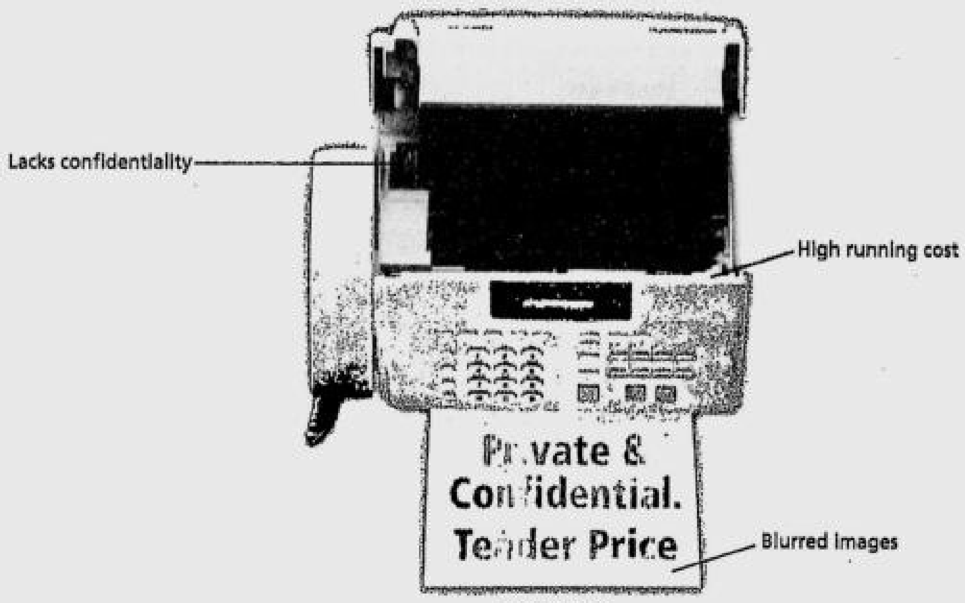

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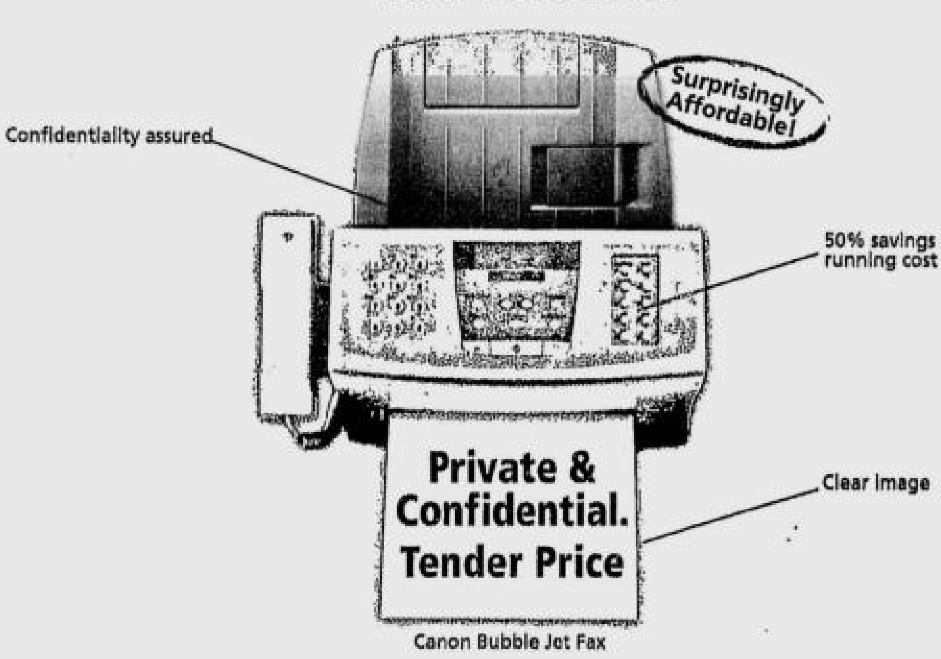
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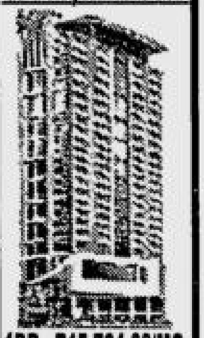

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NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that the S2 Card License #16684N99 of Dra. Ma. Patria C. Flores was lost. *(PDI-Feb. 15, 2002)*

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

NOTICE SHARE OF STOCKS CERTIFICATE NO. 29246 2426 7221 16891 27972 34058 17659 OF AYALA CORP. ISSUED TO MANUEL V. HERRERA WERE LOST SOMETIMES IN 1990.

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the heirs of the late TERNORA P. ROJAS executed affidavit of adjudication by sole heir of estate of deceased person dated Feb. 13, 2002 as per Doc#313 Page63 Book 24 Series of 2002 Acknowledged before notay public JOEL G. GORDOLA of Quezon City PDI 2 /15,22 3/1,02

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late MENELAO MERCADO has been settled extrajudicially among his heirs per Doc 6 Page 2 Book II Series of 2002 Before Notary public Atty. Guillermo R. Viejan PTR 2847003 PDI 2/8,15,22,02

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late MATEO CARLOS Y MIJOS has been extra-judicially settled among his heirs under Doc. No. 495, Page No. 100, Book No. XII, Series of 2001, by Notary Public, Eustacio V. Flores, Pateros, Metro Manila *(PDI-Feb. 15, 22, March 1, 2002)*

PERSONAL

ANGEL, you make me feel brand new. GOD bless u ! - HAPPY MAN

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
OFFICE OF A NOTARY PUBLIC
FOR THE CITY OF MANILA

PHILIPPINE SAVINGS BANK,
Mortgagee,

-versus- FOR: Foreclosure of Real Estate Mortgage under Act No. 3135, as amended.

Sps. MANGODA ALIP TAGORANAO and OMAIRA HAMID TAGORANAO,
Mortgagors.
FREM Case No. 01-12-71

x--------------------------------------x

NOTICE OF SALE

Upon extra-judicial petition for sale under Act 3135, as amended by Act 4118, filed by PHILIPPINE SAVINGS BANK, mortgagee, against the mortgagors, Sps. MANGODA ALIP TAGORANAO and OMAIRA HAMID TAGORANAO, with address at No. 3581 Magsaysay Arellano Street, Bacoor, Sta. Mesa, Manila, to satisfy the mortgaged indebtedness, in the total amount of FOUR MILLION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY NINE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED SEVENTY SEVEN PESOS AND 71/100 (P4,169,977.71) as of September 15, 2001, including principal, interest, penalty charges and attorney's fees but not including all legal fees and expenses for the foreclosure and sale, the undersigned Notary Public for the City of Manila will sell at PUBLIC AUCTION, to the highest bidder, FOR CASH and in Philippine Currency, on *March 16, 2002 at 10:00 o'clock in the morning* or soon thereafter, *in front of the main entrance of the City Hall Building, Manila, facing Philippine Normal University*, the following described real estate property, together with all the buildings and improvements existing thereon, to wit:

TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE
No. 235921

"A PARCEL OF LAND (Lot 42, Block 1 of the subdivision plan Psd-23058, being a portion of Lot 3-J-3-B of the subdivision plan; Psd-20550, G.L.R.O. Rec. No. 7680), situated in the District of Sampaloc, City of Manila. Bounded on the NW., by Lot 41 Block 1 of the subdivision plan; on the NE., by Lot 3-J-1-A of plan Psd-20615; on the SE., by Lot 43, Block 1 of the subdivision plan; on the SW. by Street Lot 2 of the subdivision plan. Beginning xxx containing an area of TWO HUNDRED FORTY FIVE SQUARE METERS AND SEVENTY SQUARE DECIMETERS (245.70), more or less."

Including the house/building and other improvements now erected or hereafter may be erected on the foregoing described torrens title/s.

This Notice of Sale will be posted for a period of twenty (20) days in three (3) of the most conspicuous public places where the subject property is located and in the City of Manila where the sale shall take place, and likewise, a copy will be published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer, a newspaper of general circulation in the City of Manila, once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks before the date of auction sale.

Prospective bidders or buyers are hereby enjoined to investigate for themselves the title to the property and the encumbrances thereon, if there be any.

City of Manila; January 31, 2002.

ULPIANO S. MADAMBA
Notary Public
Until December 31, 2003
PTR No. 0969420
Issued at Manila City
On January 08, 2002
IBP O.R. No. 545563
On January 08, 2002
Issued at Manila City

WARNING:

It is absolutely prohibited to remove, deface or destroy this Notice of Sale, on or before the date of the auction sale under penalty of the law.

COPY FURNISHED:

1. ATTY. SYLVIA M. MARFIL
   Room 2114, Herrera Tower
   98 Herrera Corner Valero Streets, Ayala North, City of Makati
2. SPS. MANGODA ALIP TAGORANAO
   and OMAIRA HAMID TAGORANAO
   No. 3581 Magsaysay Arellano Street, Bacoor, Sta. Mesa, Manila

(PDI - Feb. 8, 15 & 22, 2002)

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VALLEY GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB, INC.

INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION TO BID

All parties interested to bid for the up-grading of the 18-hole South Course, VALLEY GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB, INC. (VGCCI), Antipolo City either as project manager/ contractor are invited to pre-qualify with the Technical Committee, VGCCI. Only pre-qualified contractors/ construction managers shall be invited to participate in the forthcoming bidding.

Pre-qualification documents are available for issuance to prospective bidders beginning **February 11, 2002** at VGCCI, Antipolo City and payment of a non-refundable fee of FIVE HUNDRED PESOS (P500.00) per set.

Contract Person : Judy Suarez

Telephone no. : 6584901 to 03 / 6580079

Closing date for receipt by the Technical Committe, VGCCI of the duly accomplished Pre-qualification Documents will be on **February 25, 2002.**

VALLEY GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB, INC.

(Sgd.) MARIANO N. CANILAO, JR.
General Manager

(PDI--Feb. 10 & 15, 2002)

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MESSAGE OF THANKS

WE, THE FAMILY OF THE LATE

SOLEDAD *"Solita"* VELEZ PANGILINAN

WHO JOINED OUR LORD AND CREATOR
ON FEBRUARY 5, 2002

SINCERELY CONVEY OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION TO ALL WHO OFFERED MASSES AND PRAYERS, SENT FLOWERS AND MESSAGES OF SYMPATHY, GAVE DONATIONS, VISITED AND KEPT VIGIL, ATTENDED THE FUNERAL RITES AND DAYS OF PRAYER AND WHO, IN COUNTLESS AND IMMEASURABLE WAYS, CONDOLED WITH AND COMFORTED US IN OUR MOMENT OF GRIEF.

MAY THE GOOD LORD BLESS ALL OF YOU.

VIRGINIA V. DABU

"Virgie"

October 10, 1921 - February 13, 2002

The best mother, and friend to all.
She will surely live on in all our lives.
We will surely miss you MOMMY!

Date of Death : February 13, 2002
Wake Period : February 13-17, 2002
Wake Location : Arlington East The Garden Chapels, San Miguel, Pasig City
Interment Date & Time : February 17, 2002; 4:00 PM
Interment Place : Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City

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KALAW: **528-0213; 527-3342**
MEGAMALL: **635-0219; 635-0220**

NATALIO VIZCONDE DE LEON

Of Calaca, Batangas

December 1, 1935 - February 14, 2002

He is survived by his wife **Carina**; children **Perry & Myra, Mariles & Raul, Noel, Chito, Gener & Joy, Doia & Jhun, Jun-jun & Aileen, Jhing**; and grandchildren; brothers and sister **Alfredo** (deceased), **Socorro** (deceased), **Armando, Romualdo** (deceased).

His remains lie in state at 122 Marasigan Street, Calaca, Batangas.

Interment will be on Sunday, February 17, 2002 after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at the Calaca Catholic Cemetery.

"The Lord will open to them the gate of Paradise, and they will return to that homeland where there is no death, but only lasting joy."

FRANCISCO "KIKO" MANUEL DIZON SR.

Peacefully returned to his Lord Creator on February 6, 2002 at the age of 79 in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

His bereaved wife **Remy**; children **Alice, Daisy, Frankie Jr., Robert, Doris, Bobby, Betty, Dadong, Danny, Demie, Diomeng** and **Dante**; children-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains will lie in state at the San Roque Chapel in Angat, Bulacan from February 14 to 16, 2002.

Interment will be announced later.

Engr. FEDERICO ALMALVEZ JAUREGUI

of Biñan, Laguna

Has heeded heaven's whisper of peace on February 13, 2002 at the age of 74.

His ever dearest wife **ASUNCION**; children **RAMONCITO & FLORA, FEDERICO JR., MELISSA & CARMINA**; and grandchildren, brothers and sisters request the readers to help keep the faith by praying for his soul.

His body lies in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

The Mass of Resurrection will be celebrated on Sunday, February 17, 2002 at 8:00 AM.

Interment will follow at La Loma Manila Cemetery.

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City, Tels. 715-1026; 715-1031; 715-1027
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Tels. 747-6599, 747-6609 • Telefax 641-1760
AUREA QUIOGUE FUNERAL HOMES
243 A.B. Fernandez Ave., Dagupan City, Pangasinan
Tels. (0755) 522-3451, 522-2138, (0917) 434-9976
CAPITOL MEMORIAL CHAPELS INC.
1305 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City, Tel. 732-0309, 732-1095
CEBU ROLLING HILLS MEMORIAL CHAPELS INC.
Cebu Branch: A.S. Fortuna Street, Banilad, Mandaue City, Cebu
Tels. 346-2643, 346-2601
COSMOPOLITAN FUNERAL HOMES, INC.
Nivel Hills, Lahug, Cebu City, Tels. 231-0721, 231-3192
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Camus Ext. cor. J. Abad Santos, Davao City; Tels. (082) 227-1201; 227-1265
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#2 Bayani St., Galas, Quezon City
Tels. 740-2583, 781-3705, 781-3688; 413-9400; 715-6594
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Tels. (047) 222-3605, (047) 611-1050; (047) 222-4512; (047) 224-2014
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Per DTI-NCR Permit No.0239.Series of 2002.

BusinessFriday

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

Make people stop and read your ad

By Roger Pe

"ONE good ad can do the work of ten."

That was the famous line of Bill Bernbach, the man who created some of the world's most successful advertising campaigns such as those for VW Beetle and Polaroid.

We often see ads look like brochures. They burst to the seams with information that bore readers to tears.

They may not be bad. The creators may have a different strategy in mind like hitting many birds with one stone.

The only question is, how many? And how far can they build the brand? They may be able to make cash registers ring initially, but for how long?

We also see brands that change campaign strategies and 'look,' as often as people change clothes. Hey, good for somebody else's coffers but what about for your product's image?

An ad with too many messages can lose its appeal instantly. Similarly, an ad with a cluttered layout can bore a prospective consumer. No amount of media money or ad placements, even in the biggest circulating broadsheet, can make people remember your ad if it's not single-minded, focused and creative.

If you can make a reader stare at your ad for several minutes, your battle is half won. If they turn to the next page as soon as they see your ad, start thinking of how to recoup your wasted money.

Here are some tested pointers on how you can make people stop and read your ad the way you want them to:

First, you must believe that advertising doesn't create a better product. Advertising merely conveys the claims and the message the manufacturers want to say about the product.

If you have a bad product and a bad strategy, advertising might just hasten its demise.

The next logical thing to do is, highlight your product's positive attributes and tell the consumer why it's better than competition. Then, find a better and bigger idea to communicate it. Having found that, execute it in a fresh and arresting way. Easier said than done? Here's the rule: Know what your competition is doing. Then, do exactly the opposite.

Second, give your people creative freedom. Along with creative freedom, however, is responsibility.

Know what your market wants.

An idea isn't good just because it's never been

done before. An idea isn't good just because it's wacky. An idea isn't good just because it's different.

The bottomline is your ad must still do the job it's supposed to do—sell your product. Irrelevant brilliance can only alienate you from the consumer.

Third, stay with the product. Your ad must speak about one thing only: your product. Stick with your product. Be brutally honest about it. And speak with one voice so the man-on-the-street will easily recognize and know how to relate to it.

Fourth, believe that the memorable never emerged from a formula. When something is imposed, the creative well can quickly dry up and you begin to fall into the "me-too" trap. Mario Monteagudo, owner of more than 30 Creative Guild awards, says, "when your competition zigs ... zag!"

Lastly, remember that the medium is the message. Choose the biggest circulating newspaper for your print campaign. Pick up the hours and radio stations your market is most likely to be listening to for your radio advertising. And prefer prime time slots as well as selected programs your consumers will most likely be watching on television.

Fear of being trounced by competition? When budgets are tight, you need only one great ad to better your chances in cutting through the clutter.

(From left) DAPHNE Doroja, Damian Byrne, Timothhy Styling, Gladys Pascual, Grace Pena.

Advertising is all about 'hitting home'

THERE are cocky advertisements that say, "buy me, I'm the best," there are advertisements that win creative awards but do not make cash registers ring.

There are ads that read like company annual reports; and there are ads that forget about the consumer altogether.

Some marketing campaigns make customers happy only for as long as the promo lasts; the real hard work is in making consumers stay happy and loyal—and that's where Impiric and its brand of advertising come in.

Impiric, a Wunderman Company with headquarters in New York, is a global, full-service communications and consulting company that is over 50 years young. Damian Byrne, client services director of Impiric, explains Customer Relationship Management using their company slogan "Insight, Imagination, Impact" "Customer Relationship Management is customer-centric . . . it begins with an understanding of the market, gaining insight into consumers' preferences and prejudices, and then shaping marketing goals into measurable results."

For the Ford Group Philippines, a former local client of Impiric, the agency conducted an acquisition program via direct marketing. A direct mailer, which was sent to potential clients, included a questionnaire for finding out the client's purchasing habits, interests and lifestyle. Those who responded positively (response rate was 30 percent) were considered "hot leads" and were sent an elegant brochure that included a description of the Ford Fleet program and a feature on the car models.

According to Byrne, the feedback form is a hard-working mechanism which is very important to companies that pay attention to their clients' needs like Ford, because it alerts them on crucial matters such as how often and when the client plans to change vehicles. Ford then knows when to get in touch with the client again.

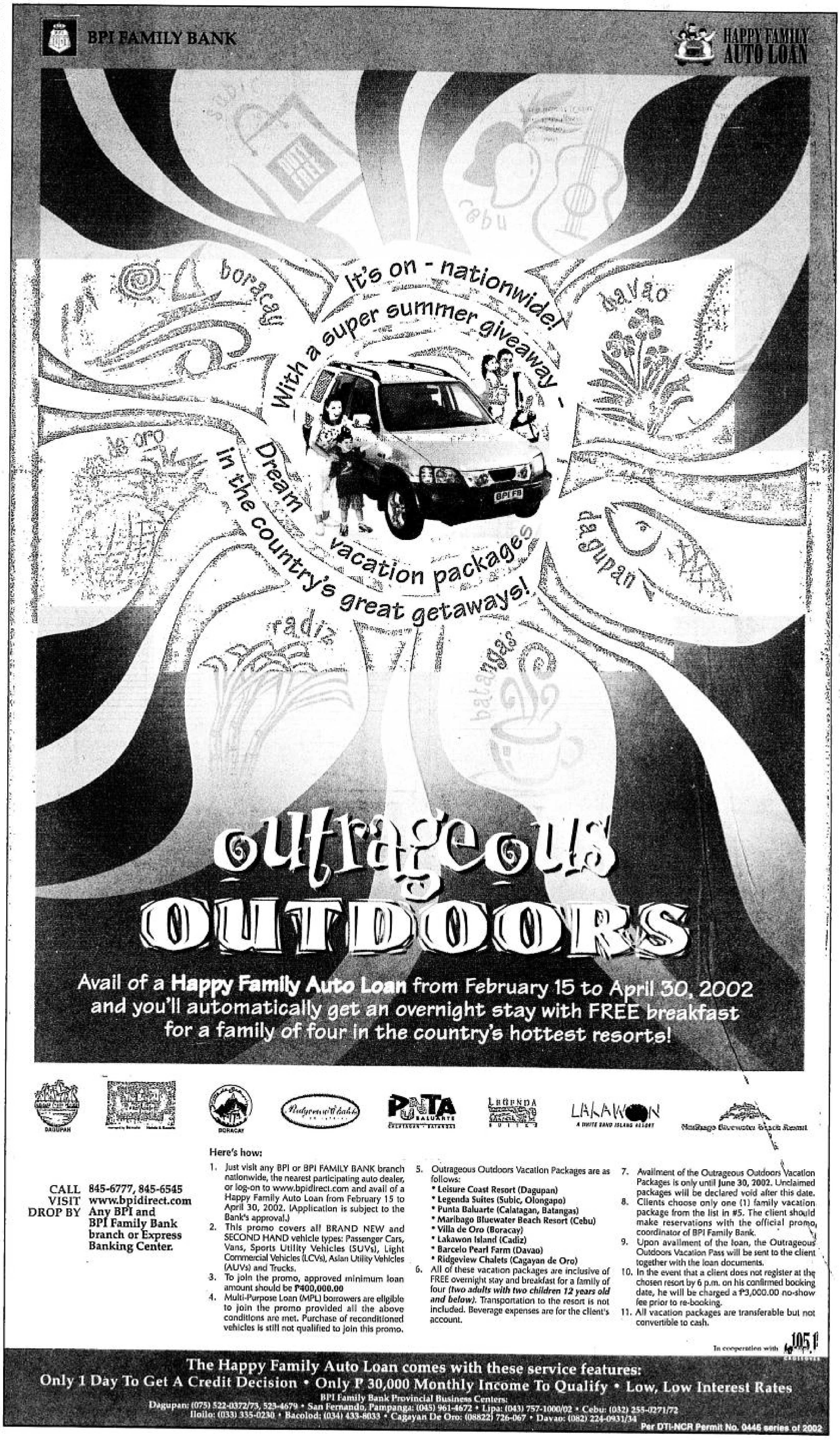
The Ford Fleet Contact Mailing program not only created a more personal partnership with the customer, it also made for a relatively thrifty and efficient advertising because only those who said "Yes" were sent the handsome direct mailers.

Imagination is the thing that makes a promotional campaign more equal than the others. Creative director Herb Skelton did the ingenious spotter program to introduce ING Life to the local market, and at the same time create a distinctly dynamic image for the insurance company (as opposed to the typically staid image of insurance firms).

The now-ubiquitous orange handprint car sticker began with Skelton painting his palm orange during a brainstorming session and daring ING Life marketing people (who, luckily, can recognize winners when they see it) agreeing with the concept.

From May to September, ING Life con-

ADVERTISING/ C3



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DROP BY Any BPI and BPI Family Bank branch or Express Banking Center.

Here's how:

1. Just visit any BPI or BPI FAMILY BANK branch nationwide, the nearest participating auto dealer, or log-on to www.bpidirect.com and avail of a Happy Family Auto Loan from February 15 to April 30, 2002. (Application is subject to the Bank's approval.)
2. This promo covers all BRAND NEW and SECOND HAND vehicle types: Passenger Cars, Vans, Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs), Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs), Asian Utility Vehicles (AUVs) and Trucks.
3. To join the promo, approved minimum loan amount should be ₱400,000.00
4. Multi-Purpose Loan (MPL) borrowers are eligible to join the promo provided all the above conditions are met. Purchase of reconditioned vehicles is still not qualified to join this promo.
5. Outrageous Outdoors Vacation Packages are as follows:
   - **Leisure Coast Resort (Dagupan)**
   - **Legenda Suites (Subic, Olongapo)**
   - **Punta Baluarte (Calatagan, Batangas)**
   - **Maribago Bluewater Beach Resort (Cebu)**
   - **Villa de Oro (Boracay)**
   - **Lakawon Island (Cadiz)**
   - **Barcelo Pearl Farm (Davao)**
   - **Ridgeview Chalets (Cagayan de Oro)**
6. All of these vacation packages are inclusive of FREE overnight stay and breakfast for a family of four *(two adults with two children 12 years old and below)*. Transportation to the resort is not included. Beverage expenses are for the client's account.
7. Availment of the Outrageous Outdoors Vacation Packages is only until June 30, 2002. Unclaimed packages will be declared void after this date.
8. Clients choose only one (1) family vacation package from the list in #5. The client should make reservations with the official promo coordinator of BPI Family Bank.
9. Upon availment of the loan, the Outrageous Outdoors Vacation Pass will be sent to the client together with the loan documents.
10. In the event that a client does not register at the chosen resort by 6 p.m. on his confirmed booking date, he will be charged a ₱3,000.00 no-show fee prior to re-booking.
11. All vacation packages are transferable but not convertible to cash.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0446 series of 2002

Claims for refund

By Maria Rachel V. Riego de Dios
SGV & Co.

TAX-FILES

CLAIMS for refund or credit of overpaid or erroneously paid taxes may be filed with the Bureau of Internal Revenue while claims for refund of customs duties and taxes may be filed with the Bureau of Customs.

For refunds filed with the BIR, the Tax Code provides that the taxpayer must first file an administrative claim for refund or credit with the commissioner of the BIR within two years from the date of payment of the tax.

Section 229 of the Tax Code also gives the taxpayer the same period—two years from payment of the tax—for the filing of a suit before the Court of Tax Appeals.

Thus, when the two-year period is about to end and the claim for refund pending with the commissioner has not been acted upon, it is in the best interest of the taxpayer to file a petition for review with the CTA within the two-year period.

Otherwise, he can no longer file an appeal of an unfavorable decision to the CTA.

The requirement to file a suit with the CTA within the same two-year period stands regardless of any supervening cause that may arise after payment. It has been held that it is not necessary for the commissioner to act unfavorably on the claim for refund before the CTA may acquire jurisdiction.

Bureau of Customs

The right to claim for refund of customs duties is specifically governed by Section 1708 of the Tariff and Customs Code (TCC).

Section 1708 provides that all claims for refund of duties shall be made in writing and forwarded to the concerned customs collector. Upon receipt of the claim, the collector of customs is mandated to verify the same by the records of his office.

If the claim is found correct and in accordance with law, the collector of customs shall forward to the customs commissioner with his recommendation and all the necessary papers and documents.

What if the claim for refund remains unacted upon by the BoC? Can the taxpayer elevate the case to the CTA? Is there a similar two-year prescriptive period within which to elevate the case to the CTA?

In a Supreme Court case (Nestlé Philippines Inc. vs Honorable Court of Appeals, Court of Tax Appeals and Commissioner of Customs, G.R. No. 134114, July 6, 2001) an importer was assessed customs duties and advance sales taxes by the collector of customs of Manila on the basis of the published home consumption value (HCV).

The importer paid the same but filed the corresponding protests before the collector of customs alleging that the latter erroneously applied HCVs in determining the value for the importation.

In the protests, the importer claimed for refund of both the alleged overpaid import duties and advance sales taxes.

Within two years from payment of the advance sales tax, the importer formally filed a claim for refund of allegedly overpaid advance sales taxes with the BIR. Within the same two-year period, the importer also filed the corresponding petition for review with the CTA.

Soon after, the CTA decided in favor of the importer, granting the claim for refund of overpaid advance sales taxes on importation.

On the other hand, the protest cases for refund of alleged overpaid customs duties were left with the collector of customs. The collector of customs failed to decide after almost six years from the time the importer paid under protest the customs duties on the importation and filed the corresponding protests.

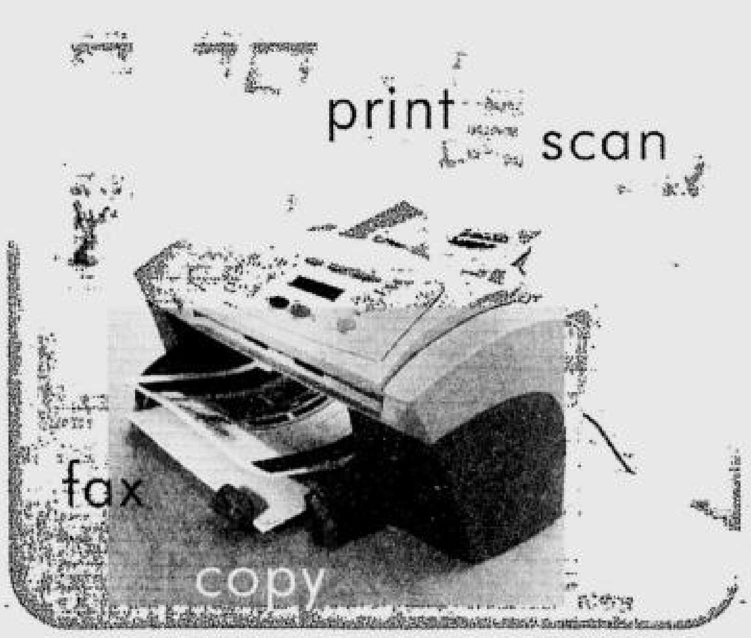
Consequently, to prevent these claims from becoming stale, the importer immediately filed a petition for review with the CTA despite the absence of a ruling on its protests from both the collector of customs and the commissioner of customs.

When the case was elevated to the Supreme Court, the importer contended that tax refunds are based on quasi-contract or *solutio indebiti*, which under Article 1145 of the Civil Code, prescribes in six years.

(A *solutio indebiti* simply means that a person is obliged to return something that he has

CLAIMS/ C3

There's more you can do.



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For more information call MSI Digiland at Tel. Nos. 439-3888(Manila) or (032)345-9441(Cebu).

per DTI-NCR permit no. 0039 series of 2002

Filipinos' love for food makes food courts' cash registries ring

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE economy has had its many ups and downs over the years but the food industry has always been resilient. Filipinos, after all, love to eat and they are adventurous. It's American food today, Chinese food tomorrow and maybe Spanish or Italian cuisine in between.

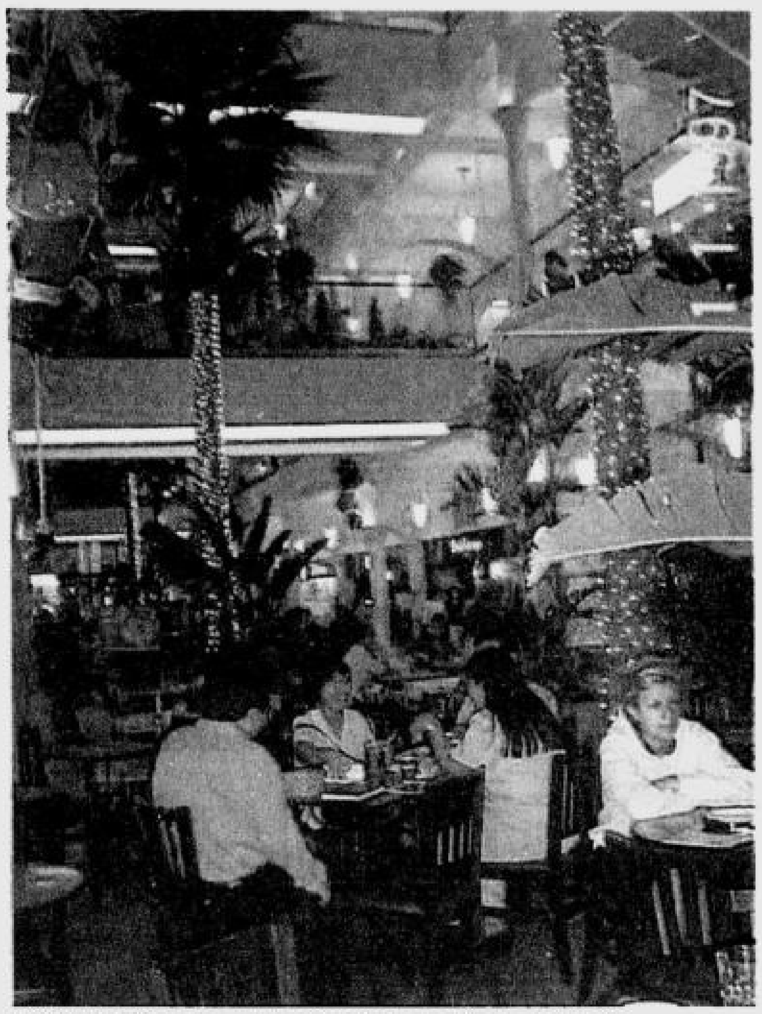
And the trend is not only seen in the affluent class, even the middle-income families have made eating out part of their family get-togethers and for celebrations.

This love for eating, however, has put pressure on food establishments to always come up with something new to attract and keep loyal customers. Failure to do so means that families will just transfer to the restaurant next door and see what it has to offer.

It is not only restaurants that are hard pressed to innovate, even the Philippines' ubiquitous shopping malls and the tall, expansive office buildings are following suit. With the Filipinos' penchant for eating, businessmen now realize that the way to their hearts and their pockets is through their stomachs.

Thus was born the food court concept. These food courts are really just modern day versions of the school and office canteens, but with more than a few twists. Far from the employees' and student canteen's of old, food courts these days have their share of ambiance and variety. These have also now become the main reasons why people troop to particular malls and office buildings to eat.

Retail Asia features three of these new food court concepts that are making waves in the Philippines.


ROCKWELL'S food court is a favorite hangout among yuppies.

Rockwell Power Plant

The Rockwell Power Plant was so called because it sits on the former site of the Rockwell oil-fired power plant that used to produce electricity for Metro Manila from the 1950s until its shutdown in 1994.

It was mothballed or was made out of commission since then but its ideal location in Makati, the Philippines' premier business district, made it an ideal location for a new real estate and retail redevelopment.

The Lopez family that owned the Rockwell site proceeded to position the Rockwell Power Plant as a lifestyle shopping center that will house the best of the name brands in the market as well as new retailers.

And a lifestyle center is not complete without a food court.

But not just any food court, say Adele Flores, head of Rockwell's leasing, and marketing and promotions officer Angela Bella.

"The food court at the concourse level or the lower ground level at the Power Plant mall was built to look like a food street, where food tenants are encouraged to spill out into the mall's common areas.

"This is achieved by the presence of the skylight and the preserved palm trees from California that give the concourse level an outdoor appeal but within a controlled environment," Flores explains.

"The concourse is the first shopping level that greets the shoppers as they enter from the 2,000-slot carpark of the mall. The level's accessibility must be able to meet the variety and convenience expected by the shoppers," Flores adds.

The variety and the innovation do not stop at the interior design. The most important part of building a successful food court, she stresses, is the variety of the food. Rockwell wants to make sure that they have everything for everybody.

The Rockwell Power Plant has 40 food outlets—a combination of specialty restaurants, cafes and fast foods. These were chosen to cater to the needs of the A/B and upper C markets.

There is Pazzo, which serves creamy gelatos made fresh everyday and Italian meals such as pizza and pasta; Longrain that features Malaysian, Thai, Indonesian and Singaporean cuisine, Hot Café which serves traditional Filipino food and Kaya for those who are longing for Korean cuisine.

The combination of the interior design and the variety of the food make the Rockwell Power Plant the new yardstick for a successful food court in a mall.

Foodpark at The Enterprise

Before food court developer Raintree Partners came to the Philippine market in 1996, employees usually had to go out of their buildings, endure the heat of the sun and the inconvenience of rain to get a decent meal at lunch. This was because there was nothing good to eat in their buildings.

Employees at The Enterprise, LKG Tower and the Times Plaza, however, do not have these problems because the food courts developed by Raintree offer them something new everyday.

The Foodpark was fashioned after New York City's Central Park, simulating a laid-pack and comfortable park environment with an air of interaction and constant stream of energy.

The Foodpark is a convergence venue where all, from the junior management work force to top-ranking corporate executives can meet and talk shop.

Park benches, street lamps and foliage complete the look, while a variety of food stalls with a wide array of specialty and familiar Filipino cuisine complete the food park menu.

The Foodpark is at the fourth level of The Enterprise, one of the premier office addresses in the Philippines which houses mostly multinational firms.

The area spans 1,900 square meters and can seat about 650.

Tom and Annabel Wisniewski, the visionaries behind the Foodpark concepts at the three office buildings, say they wanted to create a Foodpark that can offer a well-balanced selection of food types at moderate prices, served conveniently in a clean, comfortable and festive atmosphere.

"The concept is more than just providing a variety of food and services under one roof. We want to respond to today's market demand for casual, fun and affordable dining—particularly in malls, podiums and other forms of commercial centers," Annabel explains.

Aside from the Foodpark at the Enterprise, Raintree also operates The Times Plaza Marketplace at the 3rd level of The Times Plaza at the corner of United Nations and Taft Avenues in Ermita, Manila.

The design of the Times Plaza was inspired by charming and quaint small town bazaars and food fairs. It offers a wide selection of trinkets as well as food and drink.

It covers 1,200 square meters and can seat 350.

Another recently completed project was the Food Odyssey at LKG Tower also along Ayala Avenue in Makati City. The theme is "food and drinks are all over the planet" to be followed soon by the Food Art Gallery at GT Tower also along Ayala Avenue.

FOOD ODYSSEY
THE FOOD Odyssey at LKG is one of the newest food courts in town.

Food Styles

While other food courts have centered on the upper income brackets, the Food Styles, managed by longtime canteen concessionaire Nutriquest, has provided affordable but quality food options for the working class.

Food Styles is located at the 5th floor low rise section of the Pacific Star Building. It was opened in December last year and has been drawing crowds not only from the working professionals within the Pacific Star but also from neighboring buildings and offices along the Makati and Sen. Gil Puyat Avenues.

Behind the Food Styles concept is Nutriquest Food Service, a branchild of Sollie Agoncillo, who is a nurse by profession.

Nutriquest ventured into the catering business in 1989 and now operates the cafeteria of the big banks—Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. and Prudential Bank. The Food Styles is its newest project and its first food court.

Agoncillo says she is drawing from her long experience in the food catering business to help make the Food Styles a successful concept.

Food Styles houses 12 food concessionaires that serve different kinds of food, from French to Japanese to Filipino.

"We thought of doing a food court for Pacific Star because there is a mix of clients here. There are four embassies here, so we have to provide for them. We also cater to offices in nearby areas," she says.

Among the lessees are French café bakery Delifrance, Samurai which serves Japanese favorites like sashimi and sushi; Green Tomato which offers pizzas and pastas and Nacho Fast which offers nachos made fresh and rice bowls served over fried tortillas.

Other restaurants to enjoy include: Mongolian Food, Chinese cuisine at Causeway Bay Deli; Korean Food at UreOak, tasty Filipino and Thai dishes at Sandy's Cuisine; Mix Bar which offers a variety of beverage and of course, budget meals offered daily by Jollibee.

Advertising is all about 'hitting home'

From page C1

ducted a spot-the-orange-handprint-sticker campaign, in which every month, a person seen to be displaying the orange handprint sticker on his car gets cash or education insurance benefits amounting to P1 million.

Initially, ING Life had planned to run the campaign for three months and give out 100,000 orange handprint car stickers to existing and potential clients. People clamored for more stickers and ING Life eventually tied-up with Shell, rolling out the promotion to key provinces outside Metro Manila. The promo was extended for another two months, and the original plan to give out P3 million total worth of prizes was changed to P5 million. About a million car windshield stickers were distributed from Shell gasoline stations nationwide.

The orange handprint visual evidently clicked with the Pinoy market, and the campaign became overwhelmingly successful. It helped bring in revenues for ING Life. The visually arresting stickers are still spotted just about anywhere you go (on car bumpers, to cover up a gash; or with only the middle finger left to signify a strong sentiment) even as the promotion ended many months ago. And because the orange handprint logo became widely and easily recognized, ING Life decided to adapt the orange handprint design on business cards and company documents as well.

Impact is all about "hitting home," touching those little nerves that make people want to go out and patronize the brand. Citibank Platinum's target market is discriminating CEO-types not easily impressed by glossy advertising. Impiric designed a stylish mailer for Citibank Platinum, and the brochures were hand delivered to some of the country's who's-who. Tucked in the brochure was a little how-to-care-for-platinum-possessions booklet; a small but very thoughtful gesture. It's really the little things that add up to customer satisfaction; that extra-mile walk may someday translate to brand loyalty.

Byrne and Skelton are finding that Filipino consumers are like their global counterparts in most ways but are especially drawn to food, humor and music (almost all TV commercials are mini song-and-dance shows). With a team of 21 Filipinos who come to the Impiric office everyday thinking as regular consumers, Impiric works "by creating value for our clients and their customers, building trust and driving commerce." Their clients include BOC, TNT, Unicef, Siemens, SkyCable, Shellane and Starbucks.

Impiric provides the following "trackable," effective and cost-efficient services: direct response advertising, events organization, call center management, data services, electronic direct mailing and customer service satisfaction survey.

Byrne says advertising is like a toolbox wherein you use a different tool for a different job—different clients with different customers have different requirements at different times.

Claims for refund

From pageC2

no right to demand.)

And since the six-year period was about to expire, it was proper to elevate the case to the CTA.

The importer further contends that there was proof of overpayment of customs duties and it was resolved with finality by the CTA in the earlier refund case covering the advance sales taxes. In that case, the tax court found that the Bureau of Customs used the wrong HCV in assessing the advance sales tax on its importation.

On the first issue, the Supreme Court held that claims for refund of allegedly overpaid customs duties are not governed by Article 2154 of the New Civil Code on quasi-contract, or the rule on solutio indebiti.

Secondly, citing Sections 2308, 2309 and 2312 of the TCC, the Supreme Court held that in all cases subject to protest, the claim for refund of customs duties may be foreclosed only when the interested party claiming refund fails to file a written protest before the collector of xustoms.

Together with this right of the claimant is the duty of the collector of customs to hear and decide on the protest within 15 days from receipt of the protest.

It appears, therefore, that an importer who files a protest and claim for refund with the BOC for customs duties paid must wait for the decision of the collector of customs and commissioner of customs before he can elevate the case to the CTA.

This is different from a claim for refund with the BIR where the law clearly requires the taxpayer to elevate the case to the CTA even if no action has been taken by the BIR on the claim for refund as long as (a) a prior administrative claim is filed, and the (b) both the administrative and judicial claims for refund are made within the two-year prescriptive period. *(For comments and suggestions, please send an e-mail to sgv mail@Andersen WO.)*

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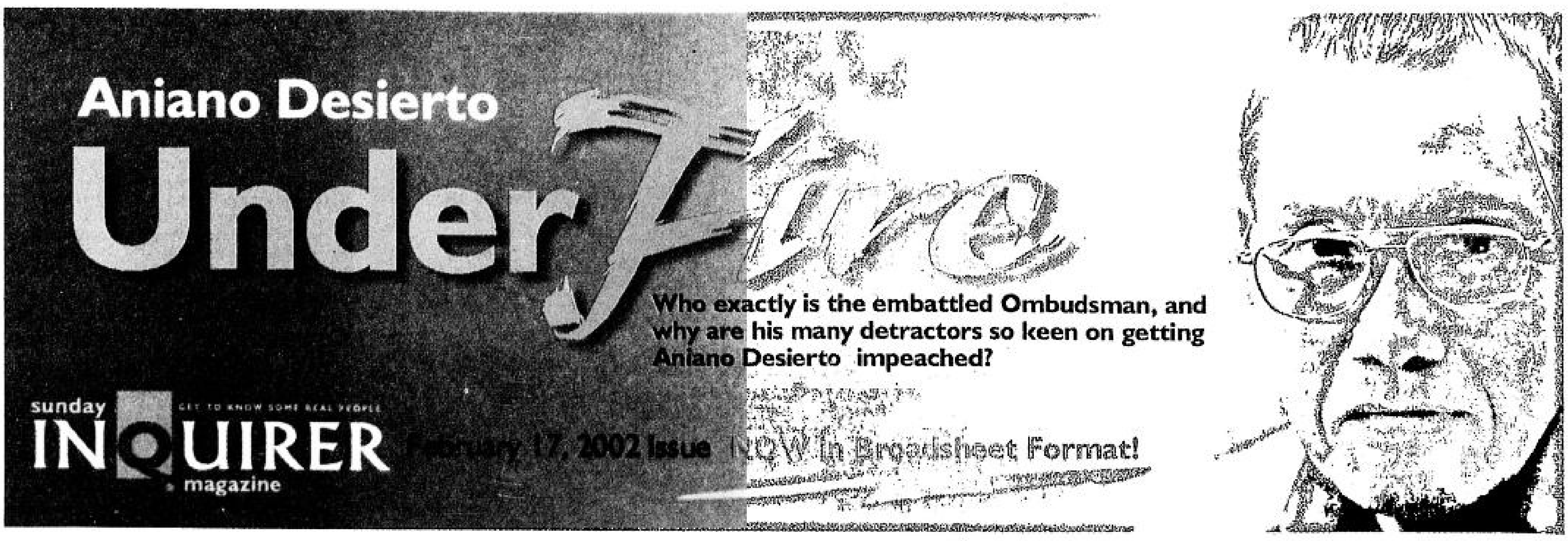

Aniano Desierto
Under Fire
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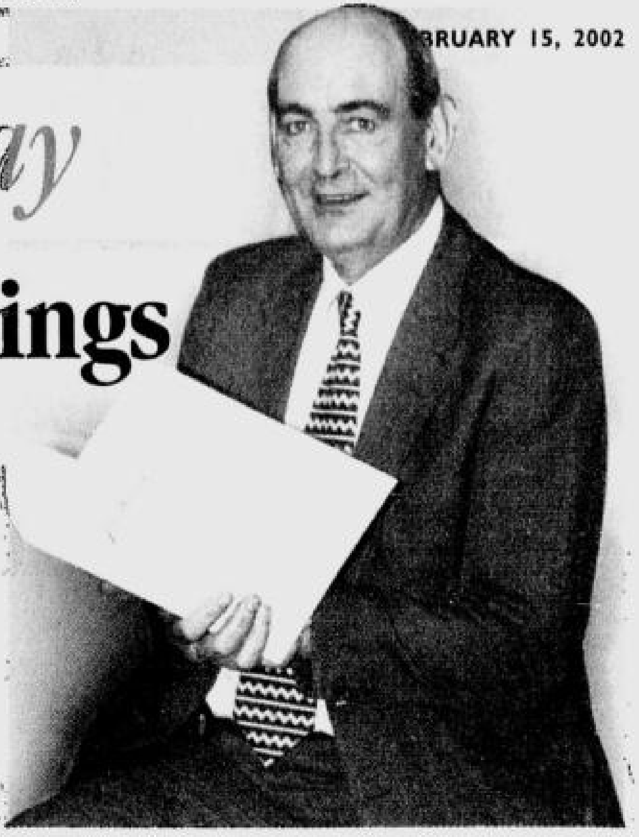
PLAXTON

HIS father worked 30 years without a holiday to put him and his three siblings through university.

It made a deep impression on Mike. Because the love that propelled his father to work three jobs to make his dream come true is the same wellspring of love that Mike Plaxton draws on each day to help Filipino families turn their dreams into reality.

"I run this company like a family, which means we care about each other and, most of all, we really care about helping our customers achieve their dreams," said Mike Plaxton, president and CEO of John Hancock Life Insurance Corp.

The firm operates in Metro Manila, Bacolod, Davao, Pampanga, Cebu Dagupan, Urdaneta and Baguio, and is recognized by more than a third of Philippine professionals.

"Life insurance is not just about dying and leaving something behind for your family. It's about improving one's quality of life today. And planning and taking the daily steps that make the long-term dreams come true," said Plaxton. "A lot of our products include a death benefit, but that's not the primary focus. Our products help people live better lives. You'll find features that help people overcome critical illnesses, help people save for golden retirements and of course, products that help parents achieve a university education for their children."

"Our University Savings Plus (USP) has been a huge hit," said Plaxton.

USP helps people to calculate how much they need to save for university, save steadily, and select the right school that best matches their child's needs.

Trained as an architect, he soon discovered there was greater satisfaction in "building people rather than buildings," and Mike began a 32-year career in the life insurance industry.

He began his career in 1970 as an agent for Norwich Union, one of the UK's largest life insurance companies, and achieved top producer status several times. He was told that no one had ever written 1,000 cases in a year, that it couldn't be done. So, of course, he did it.

He then became a branch manager, developing the company's third largest branch in the country; served as national sales training manager, developing 320 consultants and 72 managers; and progressed to branch network manager, directing 1,200 people in 36 branch offices.

He later joined John Hancock's Singapore regional office as senior regional vice president of marketing and distribution, helping over 4,000 agents serve a quarter of a million customers in Southeast Asia.

When John Hancock Philippines was launched in August 1997, Mike was one of the principal architects of the company, helping it achieve the highest first-year sales of any life insurance start-up operation in Philippine history, and become the industry leader in Bancassurance sales.

Mike took over as president and CEO of John Hancock Philippines in March 2000 and he's been building people ever since. The company has over 500 financial planners today who are trained to work as "the architects of people's dreams."

Brighter interiors lead to better sales

By Christine A. Gaylican

THEATER owners requested the owners of the first Pancake House outlet near the former Magallanes Theater to put up movie posters to entice customers to go and watch a movie.

Little did the theater owners and Pancake House realize that the movie posters would become the main décor of the restaurant chain.

Sumptuous pancakes and waffles are not the only treat in Pancake House. Customers not only get to satisfy their taste buds but the movie posters that dominate the interior design bring back memories of favorite movie scenes and unforgettable screen lines.

When new owners led by Martin P. Lorenzo of Macondray Inc. took over the Pancake House franchise he wanted to keep the movie posters, as it became the signature of Pancake House aside from the food, though he wanted to bring in a more cozy feel to the restaurant.

MARKETING STRATEGY

"We felt that Pancake House is known for the movie posters but we thought we should modify the whole ambiance to give it a more homey atmosphere," says Lorenzo in an interview.

The brighter and more modern interiors of the Pancake House restaurants have attracted more customers, says Lorenzo. This is shown in the 30-percent increase in restaurant sales since the new concept was introduced since last year.

Sales surge

Lorenzo said that system sales, consisting of franchises, company-owned stores and commissary sales, reached close to P350 million last year.

This was up by 40 percent from the P250 million made in 2000 and more than double compared to P120 million in 1999.

Lorenzo bought the Pancake House restaurant franchise from Milagros Basa and the Sta. Rosa Food Services Corp. in 2000 for P100 million and other important changes have been made since then.

"We believe that Pancake is a very strong brand. It has survived for the past 28 years despite the stiff competition and we know that we could make it stronger and make it grow further still," he says.

Lorenzo stresses that it was only the exteriors that were changed. They made sure, he says, that they maintain the good food service and quality that Pancake House has always been known for.

"We want to project that image that if people want good pancakes, waffles and tacos, what they could think of first is Pancake House," he notes.

The food and the service quality are maintained through a quality service control they have introduced to all their branches. A computer system was installed in branches and these are connected to the central office for easy monitoring, says Lorenzo.

Pancake House has also doubled its branch network and about 35 are now operating in strategic locations nationwide.

Provincial stores

Lorenzo says they have extended Pancake House's reach starting with the construction of four branches in Cebu and Davao. Plans to put up more stores in the provinces are in the pipeline.

"It is also important to select strategic locations. Like our site in the Quezon Avenue, it is doing very well, because it is near residential areas and we are also near business establishments here," Lorenzo says.

"We are also pleasantly surprised that our provincial outlets are also doing very well there, too. It seems that some patrons who have visited Manila have been to familiar to our restaurant," he adds.

According to Pancake House director for sales and marketing Bernadette M. Lee, there will be a Pancake House to be established in Pampanga and Baguio this year.

Martin shares that there has been demand for franchising though they make it a point to also carefully select their franchisees.

"We make sure that aside from the financial viability of our franchisees, we should also be committed to be hands-on managers at the store," he says. "Because in a food business one needs to be there to oversee the day-to-day operations."

Lorenzo adds that Pancake House would embark on an aggressive media campaign next year that targets the young working crowd, particularly those who are just starting their own families.

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PHYSICAL challenges complement panel discussions and workshops in honing the leadership skills and potential of student leaders at the Ayala Young Leaders Congress.

Who influences today's kids?

LIFE-STYLE

Thelma Sioson San Juan

MOM and Dad. Or so Mom and Dad like to think. But they still do—though in a relatively smaller way than in the '80s.

According to McCann-Erickson chair **Emily Abrera**, a McCann study showed that sharing the parents' place were actors/actresses, VJs and other pop celebs who seemed to exert more influence on the kids through the decades. The study also found that people in general were now looking for life-size, small-town heroes.

Who influences today's kids? Their icons? Such questions are enough to get me out of bed and send me on the road—at 6:30 a.m. And they did, last Friday. At that lifestyle-unfriendly hour, Ayala Corp.'s manager for media relations, **Berry Marfori**, and I hit the road for the Andres Soriano Center in Tagaytay where the Ayala Young Leaders Congress was going on.

.The Congress gathered 75 outstanding stu-

WHO/ p.D2

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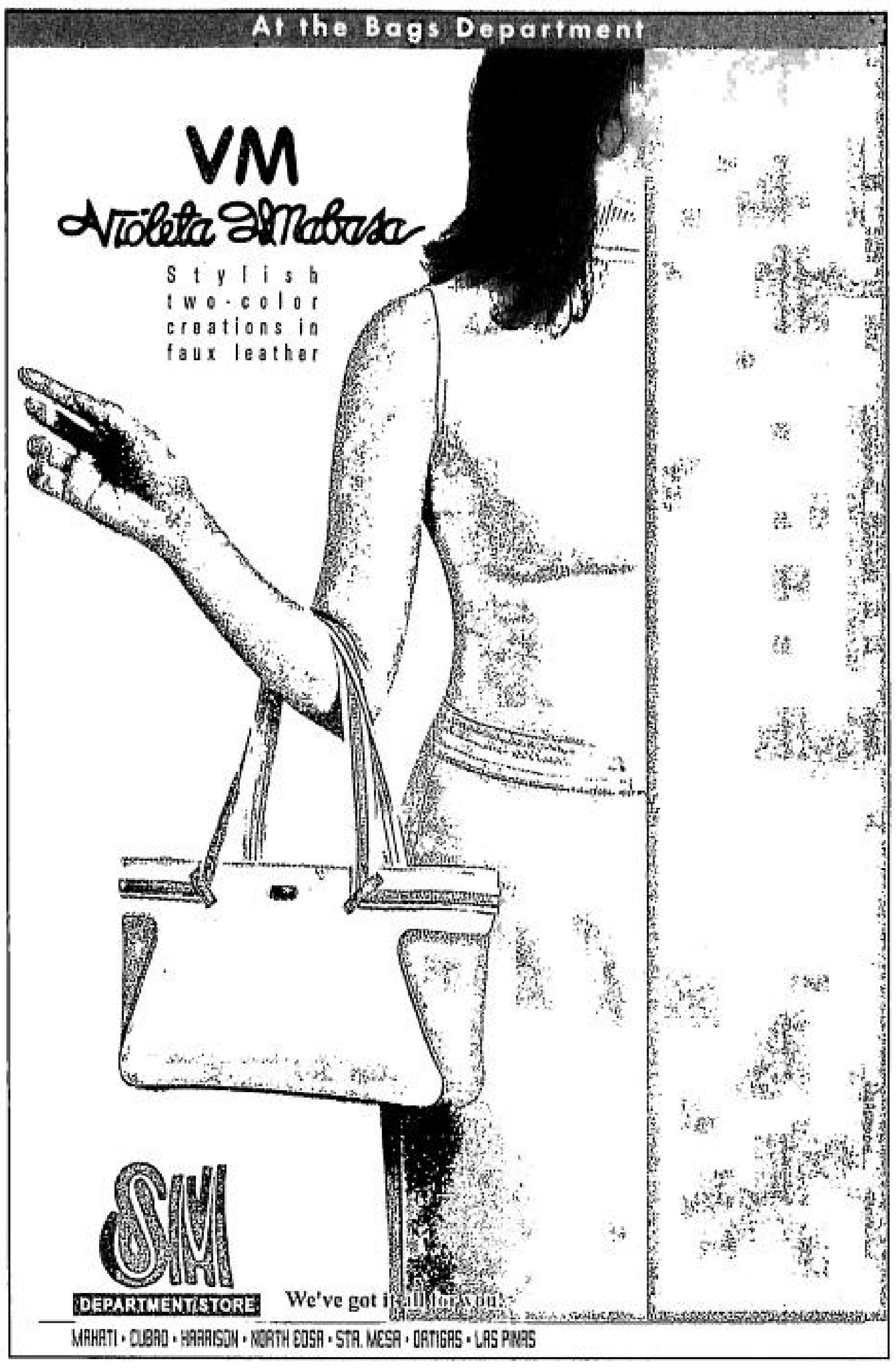

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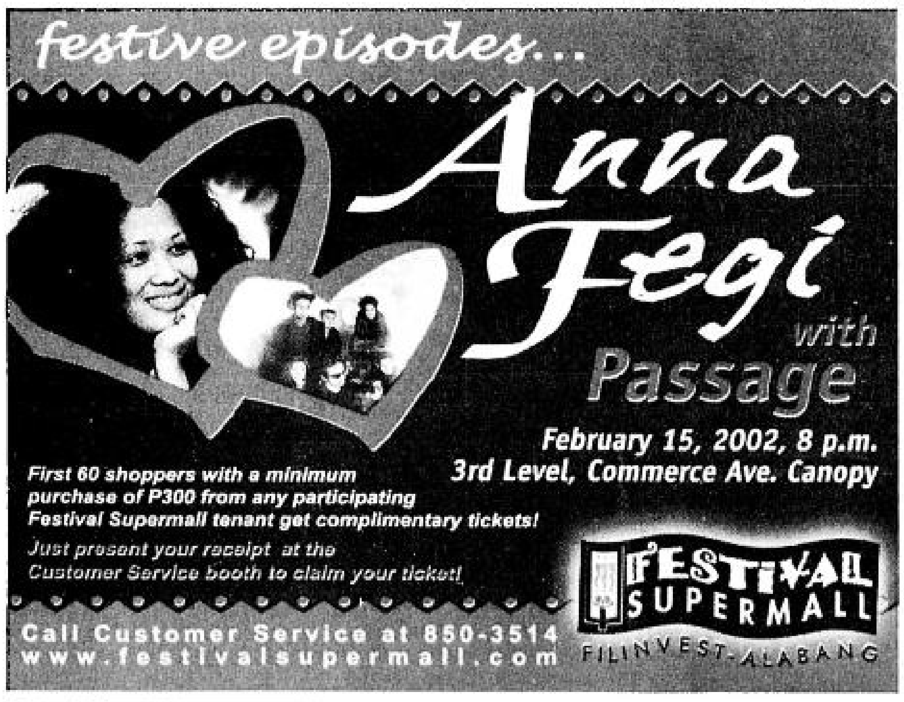

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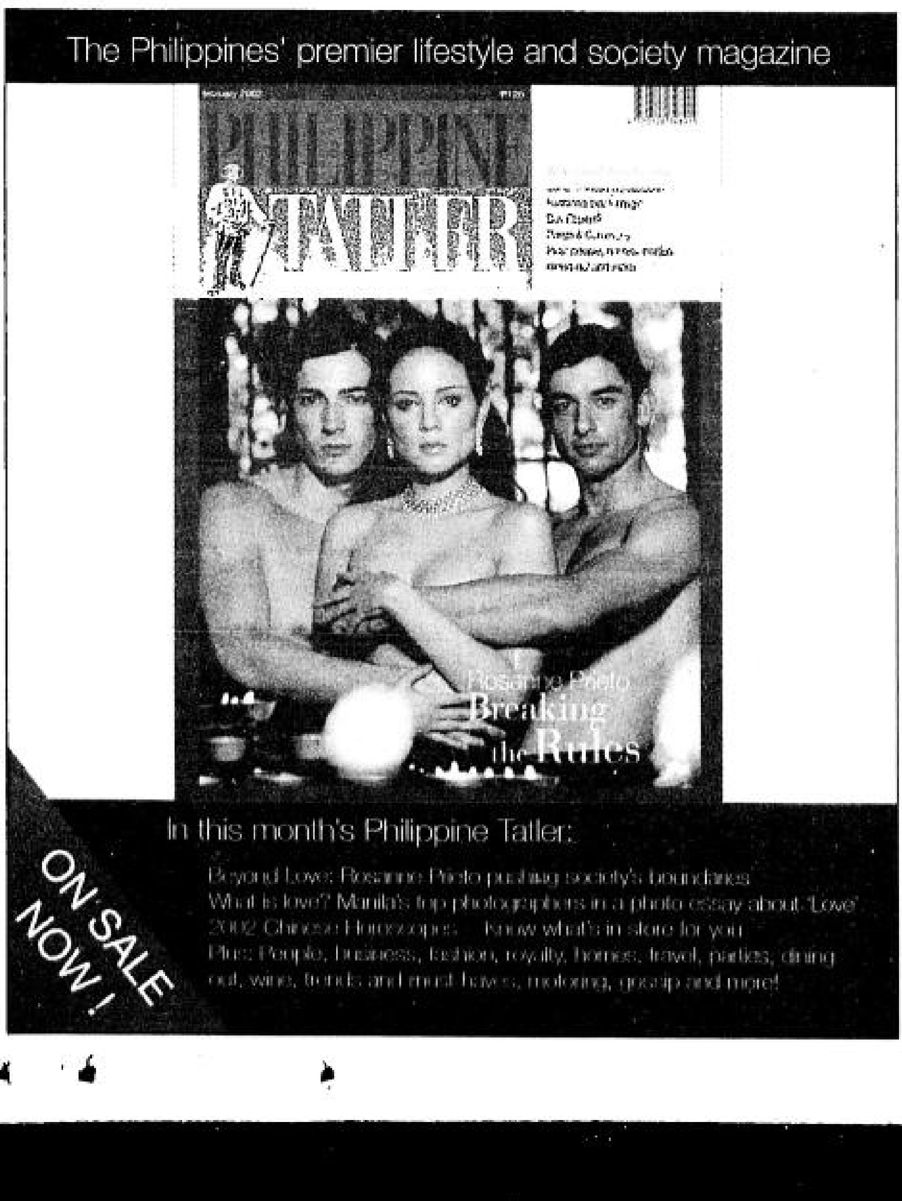

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Who influences today's kids?

From page D1

dent leaders from all over the country to discuss and bond on leadership and anything else that could define today's Filipino youth—their psyche, directions and, most important, their feelings and views on society. What made Friday's sessions interesting—the finale of the three-day meet—was that media and entertainment celebs would talk and interact with the assembly.

With Emily as moderator—one with most impressive clarity and insights—panelists **Boy Abunda**, **Donita Rose**, "Breakfast" host and youth commissioner **Bam Aquino**, INQUIRER president **Sandy Prieto-Romualdez** and congress alumna **Cathy Pabalan** spoke and reacted to very interesting issues and questions. Like:

- "What have you done?" This straight punch came from an Atenean and was directed at MTV's Donita who, fortunately, didn't skip a beat answering: "I entertained." Donita explained that at the start of her MTV stint, she told herself and her bosses that she wouldn't want to "compromise my values."

Indeed throughout the forum, Donita spoke a lot about values and her sense of Christian mission. "Destiny has put me where I am so I can use what I have to influence the youth... that they also can achieve what I have." She said that although MTV set parameters, still "what I believe in comes out," and she tried to point out the good from the bad, in a most cool and hip way, of course.

- "Show-biz values." Boy could be right when he said that show-biz people were "much maligned." "The stars like **FPJ**, the rest, they don't build their values when they are stars already. Their values came from their childhood, their families." I agree with Boy because I know that from experience with my kids; their character and values are pretty much shaped at 7; or, beyond 10, they like to believe that they can think on their own.

INQUIRER president Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez discusses the role of media as a powerful influence on the youth.

Boy said he hoped that once they entered show biz, stars could work at becoming "better people."

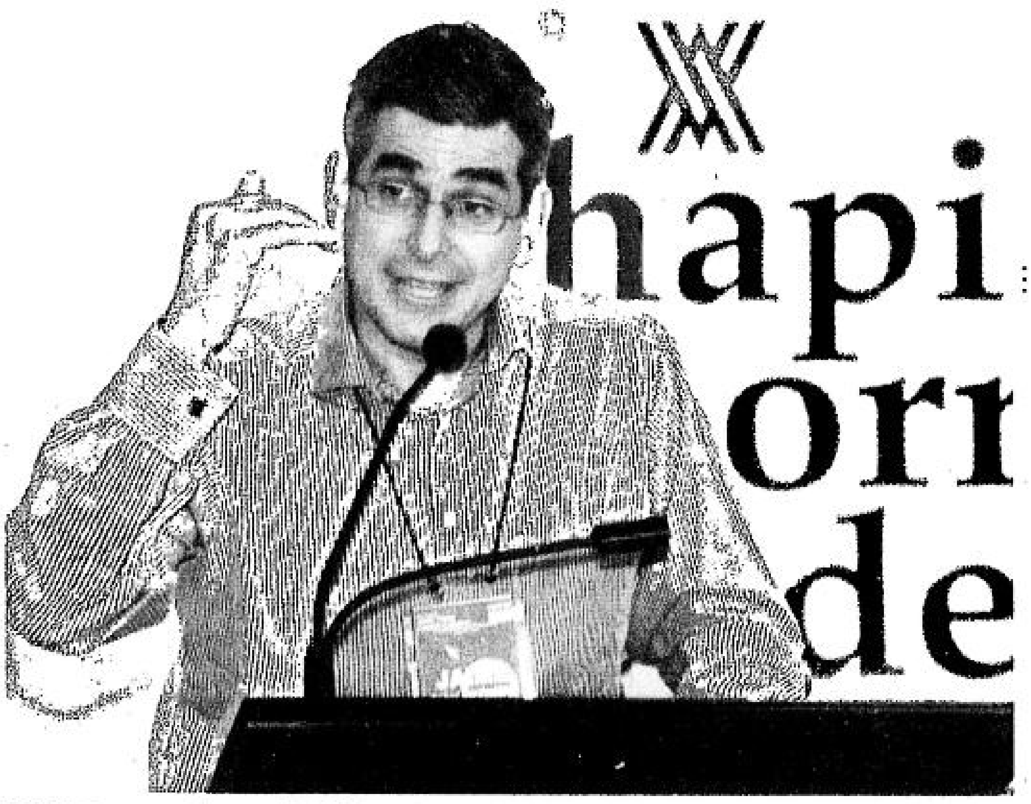
- "Why does TV make fun of ethnicity or **Zorayda**'s face?" This question came from a student. In the discussion, it became apparent that entertainment, even news—media in general—was subject to market forces, the supply answered the demand. Emily offered a solution, which I believe is the only effective one: "Express your outrage. The medium is only the reflection of society."

I've always said that like any product, media are shaped by market forces: they have to meet the demand or go bankrupt. The challenge is in how media—or any product—can raise the standards or tastes of the market while meeting the demand. In short, you shouldn't be too far ahead of your market or too behind it either. If there is a surefire formula for this, marketing will be a dead field.

- "We in PMA think sometimes that the headlines turn small issues into big issues, especially where the military is concerned... We're not given enough chance to explain. It can be very degrading." The PMA student directed this at the INQUIRER. Sandy noted that if one went over recent issues of the INQUIRER, one would note a succession of positive news and heartwarming features on the AFP and other military institutions, so this PMAer's perception did not exactly jibe with the actual output of the newspaper. I was amazed that Sandy could tick off INQUIRER stories and headlines, off the top of her head—good enough to be able to present the editorial "balance sheet"—of positive and negative reports.

- "It's not the TV shows that influence the young; it's more the TV commercials." An Atenean gave this good insight. A student in the audience added that she used Globe because she liked Donita.

- "Why can't we have intellectual movies for the next generation?" another student asked.



AYALA Corp. president and CEO Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala delivers the keynote address at the 4th Ayala Young Leaders Congress.

COMMISSIONER-AT-LARGE Paulo Benigno "Bam" Aquino IV of the National Youth Commission and MTV Asia VJ Donita Rose

I told Berry it would have been perfect if, apart from Donita and Boy, Ayala invited the content masters of television and movies, for these were the minds behind the entertainment products and the show-biz celebs. The talents are what you see on your tube and what the market swoons for, but the content is shaped by writers, producers and network executives. In the case of ABS-CBN, which produces most of the shows and movies the students kept citing in the forum, it would have been enlightening to invite **Enrico Santos** who, under **Charo Santos Concio**, oversees the concepts of the shows (like "Game Ka Na Ba?") and retools them. It would have been stimulating to hear Enrico's insights into the psychology of the audience, the behavior of the market and the psychology of the stars.

On the whole, however, the forum was dynamic and probing. Bam had a good parting shot to the young assembly: "If you don't have role models, just try to be one."

Emily issued a good challenge: "Join the loop, feed it back. This is what communication is about." Her point was, the young, if they wanted to shape media, should speak up and interact with media all the time. This is how the market can shape the media, and vice versa. This is how icons are made or un-made.

This is the fourth year of the Ayala Youth Congress, which is this conglomerate's wise investment in the next generation. Every year student leaders are singled out, screened by Ayala executives, for the congress which aims to gather the most promising student leaders for a three-day live-in meet designed to hone their leadership skills and potential.

It is Ayala's way of spreading what it believes must be "servant leadership"—"a model that puts the philosophy of service to the practice of leadership." A conglomerate can't have a better cause than this mainly because a congress such as this shows the stuff today's young are made of—what they're thinking, what's cool to them and what's "oh so over," who they swoon for, what their priorities are. In short, the Ayala Youth Congress identifies a generation—through its current leaders—and that task is exciting, amusing, enlightening, and even frightening. Nothing makes the old generation feel more uncertain than the young generation—and vice versa—for it represents the future.

I wish many other corporations could have projects as purposeful and intelligent as this. This is one project that is no mere hype or puffery; it has meat. Even if it doesn't give all the answers, at least it raises the questions.

So—what or who influences our kids? From the congress—and from my own little congress at home (I live with and for this generation at home)—I can say it is us parents, along with the Donitas, the Boy Abundas or the Linkin Parks of this world. It is us and celebs, us and media, us and our kids' peers—just as I suspected. If you're a lucky parent, you'll always be in the picture, on your kid's radar screen.

Our generation has the good/bad luck of being able to do our parenting in the '80s and '90s, when world culture has become so celebrity-oriented. We have our Meg Ryans and Tom Hanks, our kids have their... it depends. My 15-year-old doesn't share his older brother's likes. But unlike in our parents' time, these celebs are highly perishable, thank media technology for that. They're so in today, so out tomorrow.

That's the landscape our kids are in. That's what influences them or, I like to think, partly influences them. For as a parent, I can say that you have until your kid is 7 or 10 to shape him completely. I now realize how important the toddler years are—that's when they pick up their eating habits, their values, their behavior—which is why childhood is your primetime with them, your message time. Past their 10 years, the roots are pretty much set.

As a parent, I can only always try to enter my kids' world, without being under the illusion I can rule it (I try, okay?). But I can share it. And I do, many times. (Would you believe my college graduate listens to the Supremes and Dionne Warwick?) I'm not only wired to their interests, from clothes to music, I'm also proactive where these are concerned. (Don't let me elaborate on that one, might embarrass my boys.)

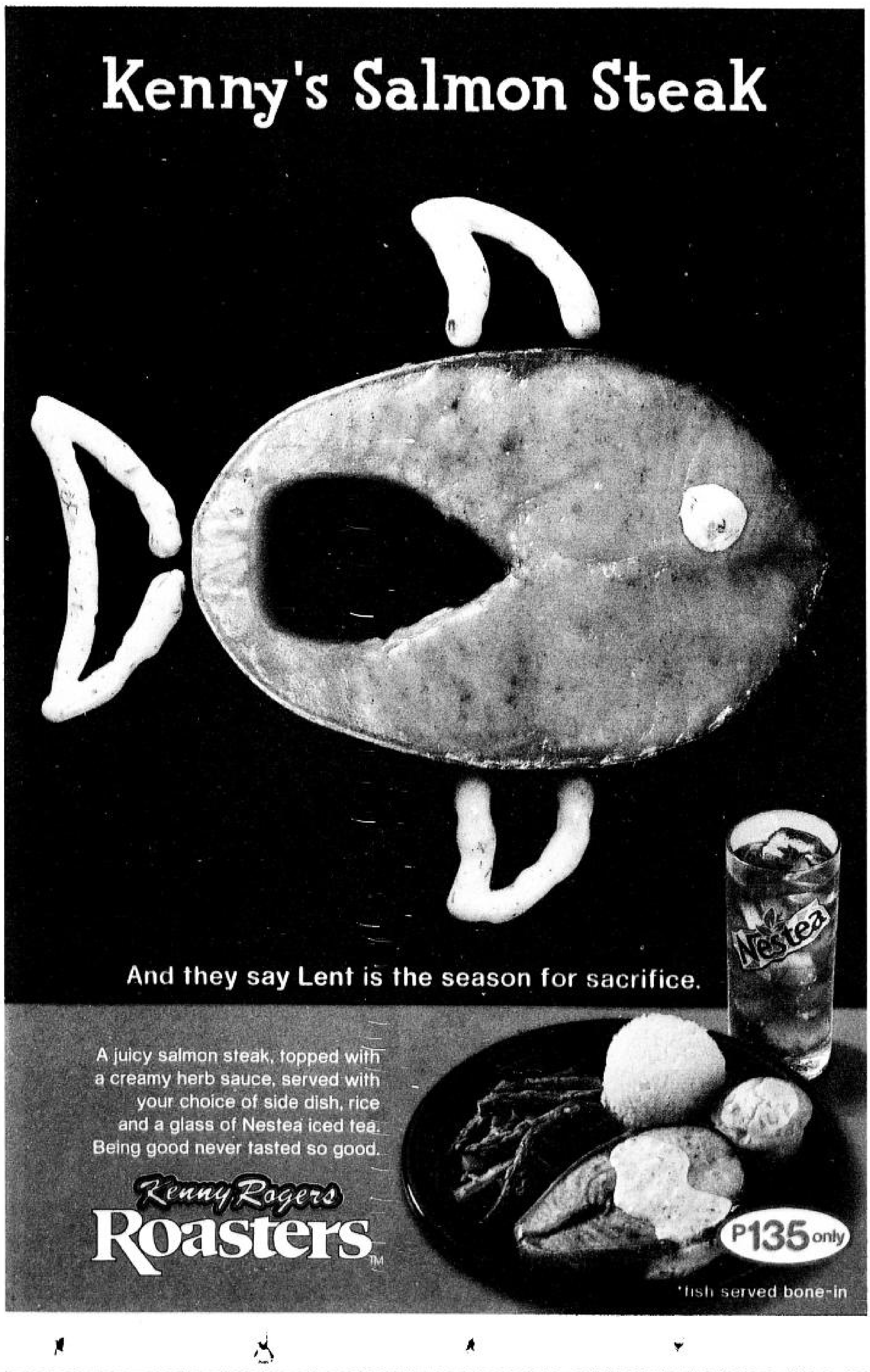
Like I wrote before, quality time, where parenting is concerned, is a myth. You're either there or not there with your kid. Kids don't say, this is quality time with Mom, while this is not; they want you around, period. You'll never know when a need will arise and what it is—yesterday afternoon, my kid wanted *tikoy* for his Math teacher. Our kids' line is Nike's: "Just do it." Ours could only be: Just be there, even if only on the cell phone. Last night, about to sleep, I wrestled my 15-year-old son in bed and popped the question: "Gambe, what influences you *ba*?" He said, "Music." He added, "Write there 'music,' Mama." Today's kids are also media savvy. (He knew I was fishing for a line for my column.) Then, certain he wouldn't be misquoted by his own mom, he flowed into sleep, into his dreams. I didn't follow him there. I allowed him his world.

Gary Flores for Ben Farrales

SOMETHING big looms in fashion. **Ben Farrales** is celebrating his 50th year in haute couture with a retrospective in July. Ben will reprise the collections that built his fame through the decades—from the *ternos* to the drapery masterpieces to the Muslim-inspired gowns. And—what should surprise Manila—the famed fashion director of the '70s and '80s, **Gary Flores**, is coming home to do the show. Gary pioneered fashion direction in the country, through the daily luncheon shows at Hyatt's La Concha, under the aegis of **Chito Madrigal Collantes**. This daily fashion circuit gave birth to the golden age of Philippine fashion and yielded our fashion tradition—from the concept of fashion direction to modeling. Gary made many of the country's top models.

Gary is now based in Maryland, where he works for a wealthy couple and is a fitness guru to many women. Helping out Gary is **Joey Espino**. This is something to look forward to.

E-mail the author at tsanjuan@link.com.ph



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On Feb. 16, Shangri-La Plaza presents the Dynamic Youth Chorale, a group of young Chinese professionals brought together by their love for music.

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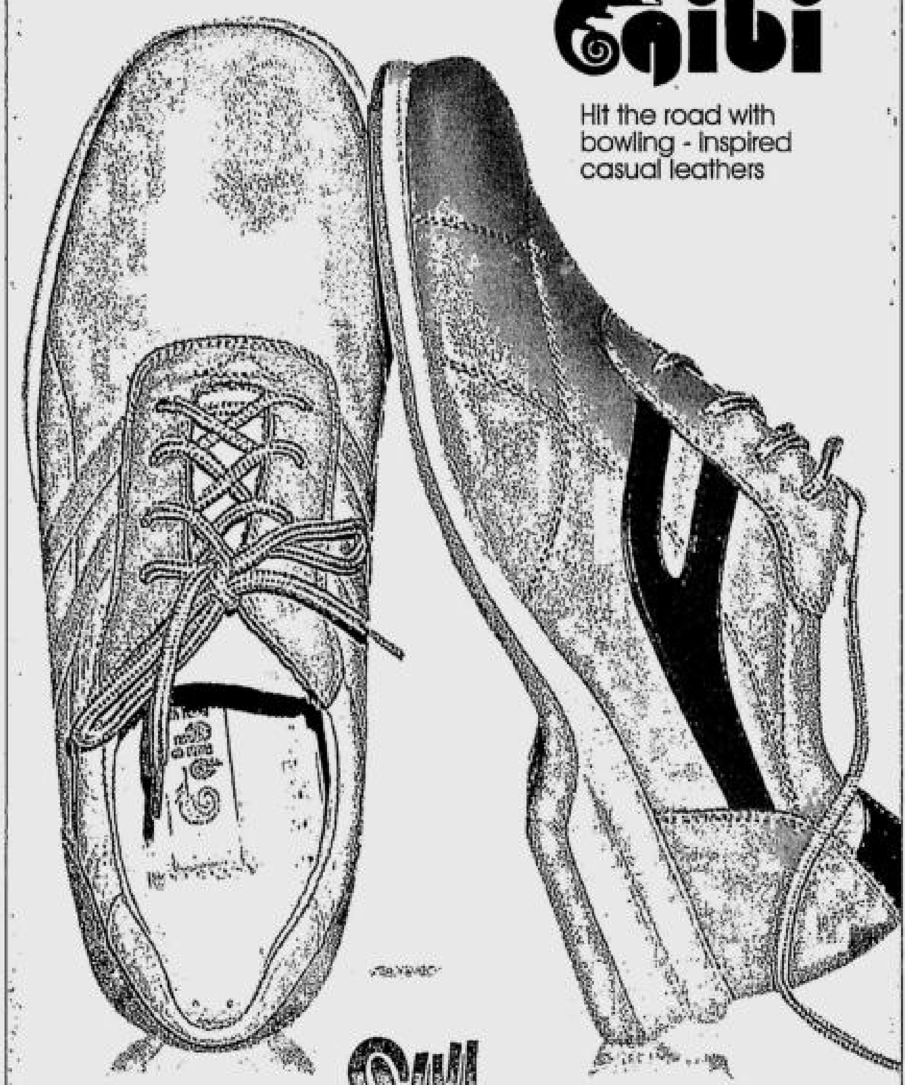

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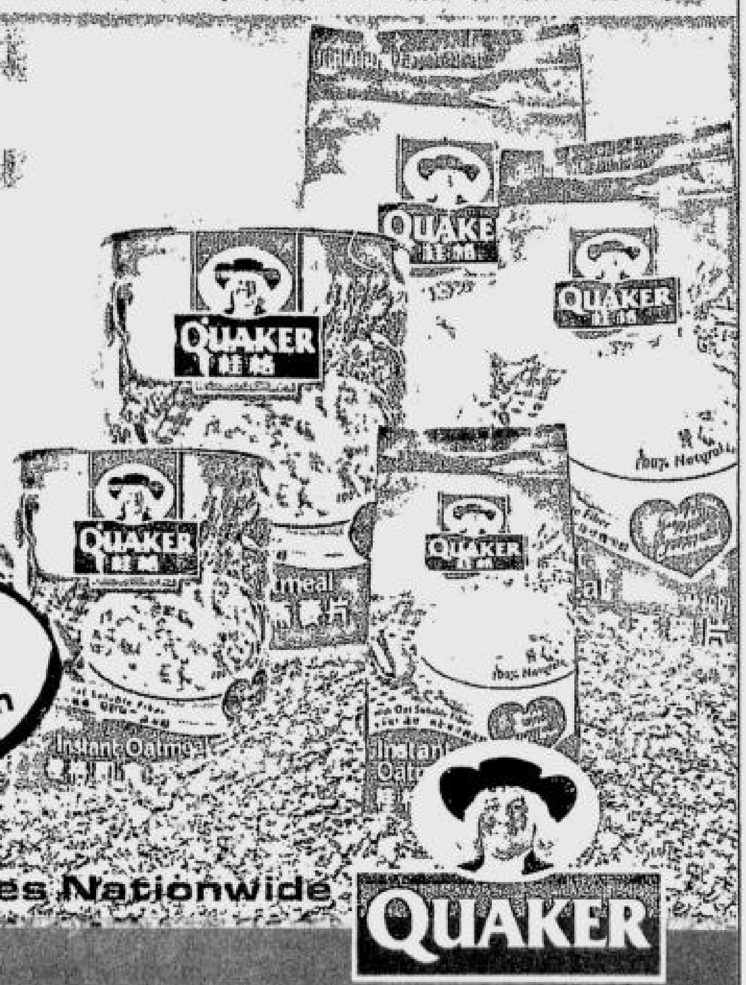

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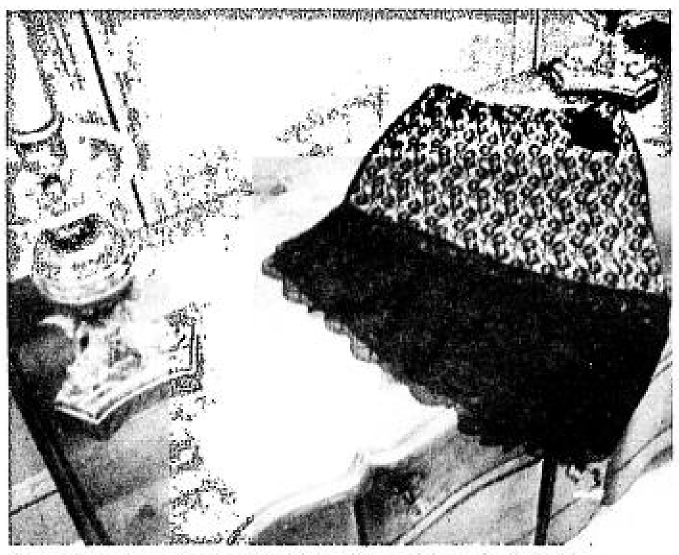


BLACK asymmetrical ruffled lace skirt with nude lining from Detour, P895

Last we heard, lace is not least

By Camille Cruz-Reyes
Contributor
Photos by Mike Alquinto

WHILE many were preparing for the day of red hearts and flying cupids, there was something else going on in the other side of the world. In the latest American Vogue, Oscar de la Renta sat through Sarah Jessica Parker's fitting of his all-white ruffled islet creation while at the Paris Fashion Week, the Tarloyan designers paved the runways in lace, sheers and tiers.

With ruffles making it big in almost any piece of clothing, lace has become quite visible. Where there is a ruffle, there will also be lace. Combined and new, lace is moving past Valentine's Day. This is not red lacey underwear we're talking about, but nude and black pieces worn alone or together.

Very French in appeal, nude colors are pairing very well with black separates. Remove the skimpy lace look from your mind and slip into lace. Not quite your casual daily ensemble, lace can put together a very elegant and feminine outfit. Finding the right elements to create an outfit is the key.

Lace pieces are not always constructed in straight, clean cuts. A top will most likely be worn in a wrap style or something similar. A nude-colored lace wrap, for instance, is simple and elegant. It provides the right amount of formality when the occasion calls for dressing up. A black skirt can be paired with this top, not in fully covered lace but just a simple slip-style with a few tiered lace on the hemline. When you go heavily laced on one separate, tone down the opposite.

Two lacey separates can work sometimes. Ruffled lace is a nice option in a skirt that doesn't spell plain and boring. A black asymmetrical hemline with diagonal tiered ruffles is a replacement for the plain black knee-length skirt. This skirt is so now and chic. To finish the perfect ensemble is a matching toned-down lacey top in mocha or nude. It must be fitted, and should end right at the waistline. Nude accessories are always good, such as a small camel-colored clutch bag. Shoes can either go black or camel. Thin straps and buckled-at-the-ankle-high sandals are a good way to finish this outfit.

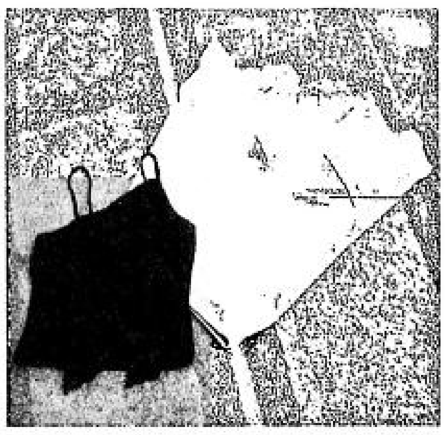
If lace is not your thing but something you'd like to try, other pieces come in minimal lace. An off-the shoulder tank top in a nylon fabric is an example. It can have the lace accents at the shoulder line for a less lacey look. Some tops can also have a mixture of lace and smocking details. A tank top can use lace straps instead of the typical spaghetti straps.

Nude and black combinations are great shades for lace. Where to find them? Almost anywhere. Sometimes the unexpected have them. For a variety, HIP houses the many labels, locally manufactured in imported styles that fit anyone's budget. Accessories are abundant as well.

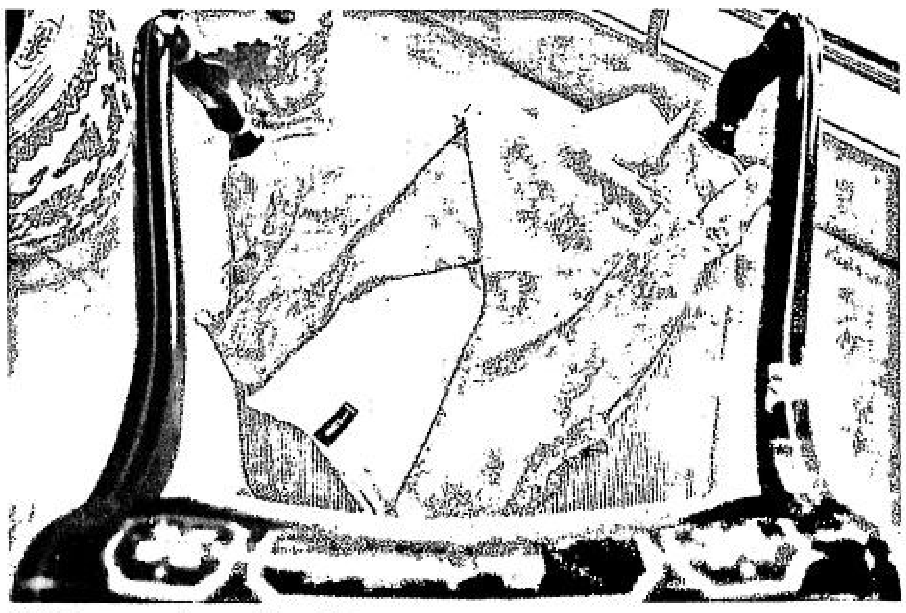
E-mail the author at unit36d@vasia.com

TAN-COLORED tank top with smocking, P735; Black slip skirt with lace hemline, P695. Both from Detour

ALL ITEMS FROM HIP, 3/F POWER PLANT MALL, ROCKWELL.



BLACK ruffled lace top, P450; nude asymmetrical lace slip skirt, P499. Both from Clad Shoppe



NUDE lace wrap top vest from Detour

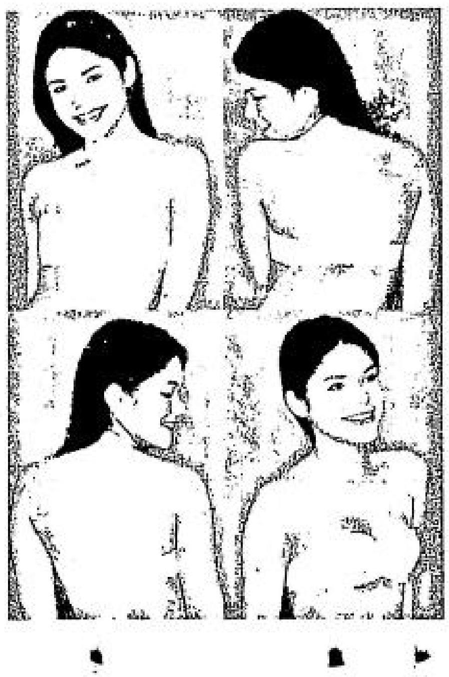
Versatile bras for fashionable teens

AVON Fashions Missy Collections introduces two new bra designs to complement perfectly a teen girl's fashion taste—Bianca Convertible and Amy Underwire Brassieres.

Bianca comes with detachable ultra-slim shoulder straps and a cool, white-striped pattern. The versatile style may be worn in five different ways to go with any top. It is the ideal bra companion for the teens' head-turning fashion choices. Available in white and sizes 32A/B to 36A/B.

Amy is a baby blue gingham bra that can be worn three ways—conventional, halter and crisscross. It has convenient front closure snaps and a dainty shirred trim along the upper cups. Teens will also love Amy's matching panty with a high-leg design and cotton crotch for all-day comfort.

Bianca Convertible and Amy Brassieres are available from Avon Ladies nationwide and at Avon Boutiques in SM Megamall, SM Southmall, Glorietta and Ali Mall.



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Promo Duration: February 15 to 28, 2002
Per DTI-NCR permit no. 0255. Series of 2002.

Wages of the 'me' millennium

Look at Me
By Jennifer Egan
415 pages

By Cherish Garcia Hernandez
Contributor

REVIEW

CHARLOTTE Swenson is a fashion model who has just recovered from a car accident that has changed her face forever. Eighty titanium screws hold together the shattered bones on her face, and while reconstructive surgery has left her scar-less, she is unrecognizable. For those familiar with Chuck Palahniuk's book, "Invisible Monsters," the plot sounds disturbingly familiar. However, while Palahniuk's story gets twisted around in his trademark nihilistic prose, Jennifer Egan's "Look at Me" remains anchored on its goal—that of magnifying a culture so obsessed with beauty.

Charlotte's integration back into a world she thought she knew is just half of the story. Another character, also named Charlotte but many years younger, is also introduced. She is the older Charlotte's antithesis—bookish, sullen and not exceptionally pretty. At first they have two completely unrelated stories—the only common ground being that the younger Charlotte is the daughter of the older Charlotte's childhood best friend, and that they both come from Rockford, Illinois.

Egan jumps back and forth between our two protagonists' lives, cleverly using the first person for the older Charlotte and the third person for the younger. The reader instantly knows whose world they are entering without missing a beat. What seems like straightforward storytelling evolves into a deeper convergence of the two worlds. Their lives actually become more parallel than we are first led to believe. Both are struggling with their identities: One searching for what is left of her world with an unrecognizable face, the other, a coming-of-age story of a young girl coming to terms with her sexuality while seeing the world as flawed and superficial.

Depths

Part mystery, part drama, the novel actually takes the reader to depths of which no clues are offered. Countless metaphors pass you by and then at the end, you look back and everything makes absolute sense. And it is not without irony that Charlotte realizes the world she lived in—that of New York City high-society gloss, a world that many of us are in awe of and many aspire to be part of—is nothing but an illusion. At one point she muses, "There is no such thing as the power of beauty, only the power to surround yourself with it."

Throughout the story, other characters enter the reader's consciousness. The mysterious Michael West, a math teacher who seems to have materialized from nowhere; Anthony Halliday, a private detective hounding the older Charlotte for clues to a character that went by the name Z; Irene Maitlock, a writer; Moose, the younger Charlotte's semi-deranged uncle; and Thomas Keene, an Internet whiz whose reality website Extra/ordinary.com purveys the stories of "real" people.

Though appearing to be marginal characters at first, each and every one of them has a story to tell, a story that somehow intertwines with everyone else's. The author's ability to create such multifaceted "supporting" characters as opposed to their cookie-cutter variety common in most novels, is commendable.

A novel presents a culture obsessed with physical beauty

Chord

Egan unfalteringly sees the story through the end while the characters linger on long after the last page has been read. And although she achieves a sense of closure at the end of the book, there is still so much we want to know about these people because they have touched a chord in us somewhere.

The title itself, "Look at Me," seems to reflect our hunger for an audience. That somehow being "seen" by others will validate our own existence. Modern society has replaced identity with image and Egan deftly brings the message across without compromising her ability to incite emotions ranging from bitterness to self-deprecating comic wit.

Egan has the gift of wonderful storytelling combined with insightfulness so rare in young authors. She even manages to tie up the discovery of glass to how people have evolved in perceiving themselves without sounding pretentious. Our foolishness in judging ourselves according to the way others see us will never change. For as long as we have the television, magazines, photographs and mirrors, the surface will always matter more than what is inside.

Society's attempts at convincing ourselves to look beyond the physical will always fail because we thrive on what is fed to us in media that perpetuate the very same thing we are trying to negate. Egan just tells this in a morality tale of her own, succeeding in offering a very good read in the process.

Available at Powerbooks

E-mail the author at cherishgh@yahoo.com

Gem of a makeup kit

CHANEL'S star product this season is a compact of eye shadows that appropriates the shimmering quality of precious jewels. The Lumieres Polychromes consists of colors that shift and change, depending on how you look at them. These transformation effects are reminiscent of a kaleidoscope, a chameleon or a scarab.

In physics, this is known as the "flip-flop" effect, an optical illusion that makes it possible to see color change, depending on whether it is being viewed head-on or obliquely. Chanel uses a high concentration of multireflective iridescent pigments. To enhance and intensify this special effect, the surface of the color is coated in a fine layer of light-varying pigments.

The 50-percent pigment concentration gives a natural smoothness. Talc and nylon powder ensure consistent application and hold on the eyelids.

Makeup cannot be successful without good accessories. Lumieres Polychromes comes with a foam applicator used to apply the shadows. The foam is made of special cells for optimum loading. The Toray hair eyeliner brush is a synthetic textile fiber to draw fine lines. Available at Rustan's.

LUMIERES Polychrome is characterized by the sapphire cut used by jewelers. This cut respects the proportions and the perfect symmetry of the facets so as to give the unique reflection of light and brilliance of color.

FORMER beauty queen Michelle Aldana wears Chanel's Matte Reflecting Makeup foundation, pink and yellow shadows from Lumieres Polychrome and Glossimer for Lips.

PHOTO BY WAHOO GUERRERO
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY CESAR SITCHON OF KAFFEE SALON, HOTEL INTER-CONTINENTAL

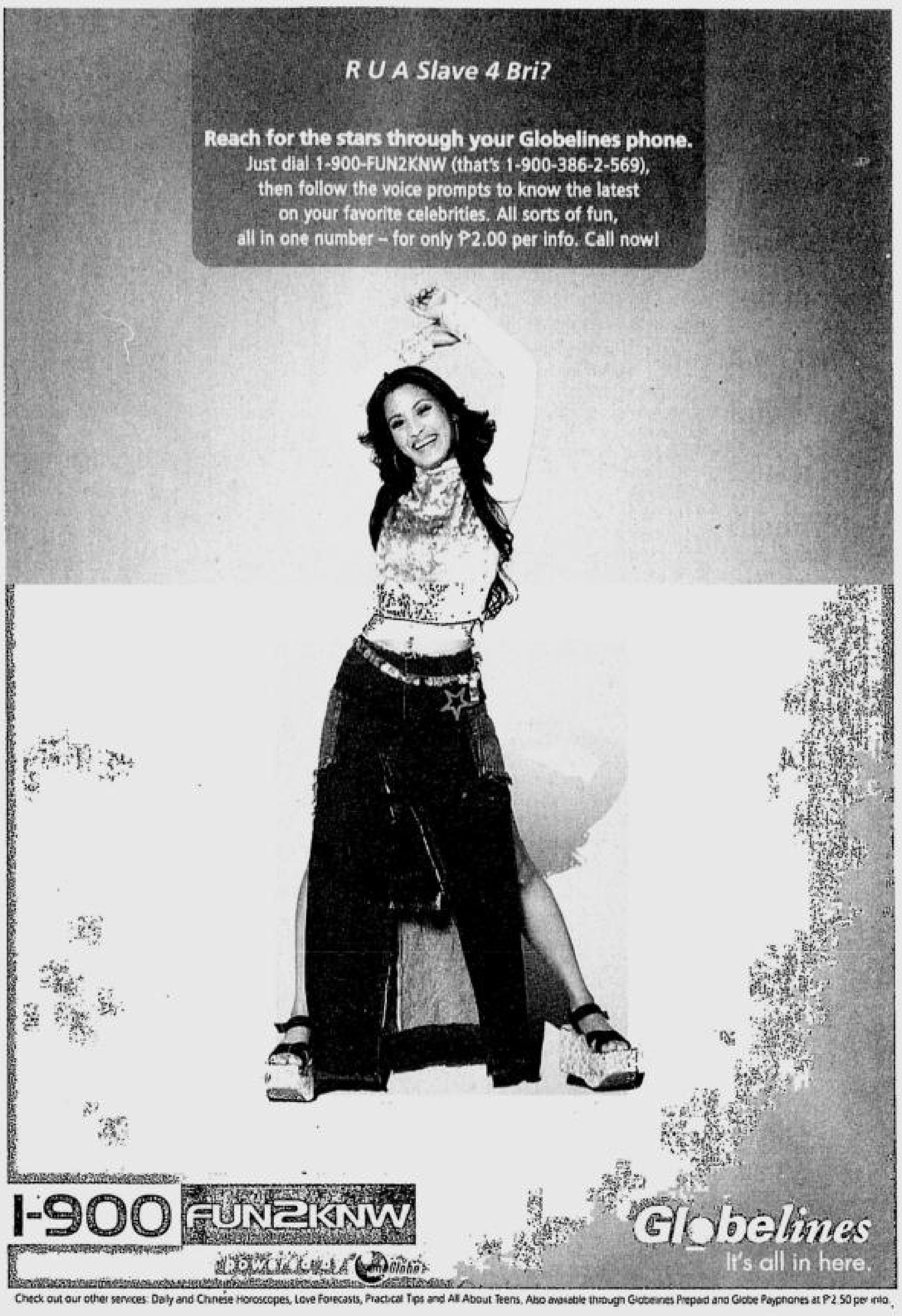
New upscale mall to open in Ortigas

BUSINESS executives and residents of plush villages and condominiums in the Ortigas area will soon have the convenience of a much nearer upscale mall.

The Podium in the Ortigas Center is a joint venture of SM Investments and Keppel Phils. Properties Inc. Located at 18 ADB Ave., it has five levels and a gross floor area of 27,974 sq m, with six basement levels for parking.

The Podium's interiors were designed by Arquitectonica (ARQ), a United States-based firm, which came up with simple but judicious composition of fluid lines and geometric volumes, among others. Highlights include a grand high entrance hall defined by a long curve of shopfronts and the skylight over the atrium.

When fully operational, the Podium will have over 100 shops and restaurants.



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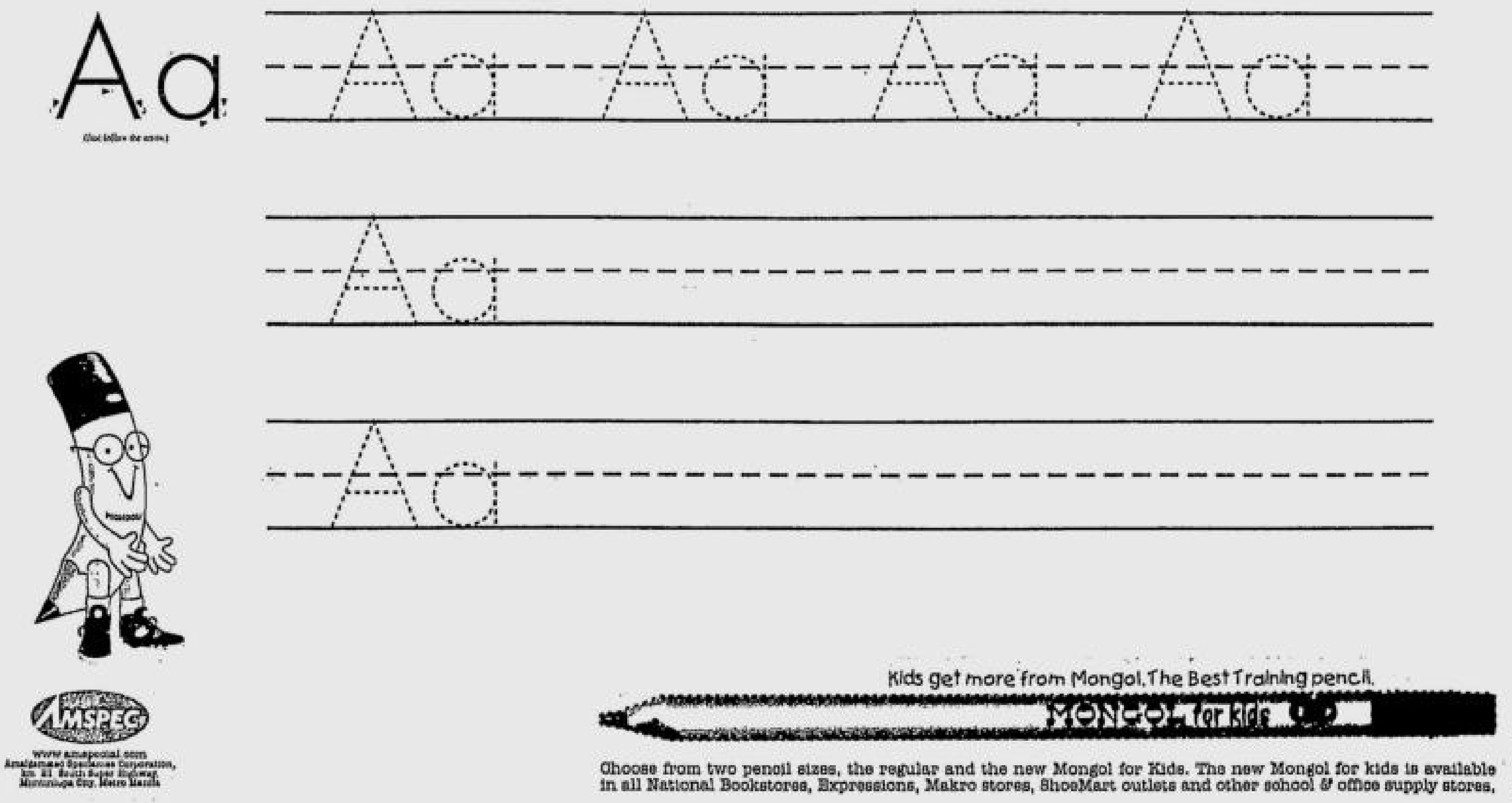

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NICK wears a washed denim zip-front jacket with a maroon V-neck knit shirt and stretch denim jeans.

ILLAC wears a blue knit shirt with a stretch denim jacket and dark blue pleat-front pants.

Filipino menswear perennial

Despite the vagaries of men's fashion, Anthony Nocom has stuck to a tried and tested formula: The Filipino male is a zealot for tailoring

By Marge C. Enriquez
Photos by Wahoo Guerrero

OVER THE YEARS that we've written about menswear designer Anthony Nocom, he always volunteers this information: The Filipino male consumer is finicky with construction. He favors tailoring over trends. He doesn't like to go around the department store. He'd rather get all his wardrobe in one area and stock them up till the next season.

Ask SM's house designer how his line Anthony Nocom has evolved, and his perennial reply is: "It hasn't really changed much. I try to maintain what I think men should wear for SM. It's a mass market store. The customers are conservative."

What distinguishes the Anthony Nocom brand from the rest?

His classic answer: The price strategy of SM Shoemart.

Predictably, the T-shirts and knitwear have been the bestsellers ever since Nocom launched his own label in 1990.

After graduating from Xavier High School, Nocom went to the Philippine School of Interior Design. Afterward, he applied as an interior designer at SM.

"If they see that you have a hidden talent, they will squeeze it out of you. They will assign you to different areas until they see where you are good at," says Nocom.

Nocom made window displays and store layouts and did merchandising. The management observed that Nocom was well-groomed and tastefully dressed in a subdued way. He was asked to join the men's boutique. At that time, the store offered imported labels. SM scion Tessie Sy-Coson wanted to establish local brands with Boutique Square. Nocom was assigned to build Designer Lines.

NICK wears a gray suit with a blue cotton shirt. Illac wears an olive jacket with a covered jacket and flat-front pants and a beige cotton shirt.

Nocom knew the laid-back taste of the consumers. With the success of the menswear line, he started his own label, Anthony Nocom, that originally catered to the young professional. In the early '90s, the collection offered basic styles in traditional masculine colors with slight variations in details.

Nocom observed that his market has grown younger. Every February and March, his suits are lapped up by young turks for the proms and graduation balls.

Price and quality

The attraction is not just the SM pricing: P3, 299 for the jacket and P669 for the trousers.

"The quality is good and the finishing is clean. I'm very particular about these. Maybe it's the Virgo, the perfectionist, in me," says Nocom.

Today the male consumer is more adventurous. He'd wear a pastel shirt under a dark, solid-colored jacket or try fabrics in shiny textures. He wears bright colors to the office without calling attention to himself.

Nocom points out that the Nehru jacket or Mao collar is popular nowadays. It is teamed with a light-colored T-shirt underneath.

Men who wear denims need not look like OFWs going to the Middle East. The new denims are combined with stretch material and rayon for sheen. Denims, constructed like formal jackets, can be worn for dressy occasions.

According to the trade magazine Apparel Scene, there will be a crossover trend associating citywear with outdoor looks. Other key trends for the summer are casual shirts with crisp, minimal detailing, casual pants with tapered legs, slim-fitting knit shirts with ribbed square necklines, utility fastening and strap tab fasteners.

Nocom takes pride in the fact that most of his clothes are still made in the Philippines. Many local brands are ordering their stocks from China, Hong Kong, Thailand and India.

For INQUIRER's pictorial, Nick Hopper and Illac Diaz play cat and mouse or Spy versus Spy at SM's new property, The Podium.

CLOTHES: ANTHONY NOCOM'S COLLECTION FOR THIS PICTORIAL WILL BE AT SM SHOEMART STORES IN MARCH
EYEWEAR: LES LUNETTES DES PARIS AND RAYBAN
FOOTWEAR: JARMAN SHOES
MODELS: NICK HOPPER, ILLAC DIAZ OF IDEAL PEOPLE
GROOMING: ROBBIE PIÑERA FOR TIGI
LOCATION: THE PODIUM, ADB AVENUE, ORTIGAS CENTER
SPECIAL THANKS: MILLIE DIZON

NICK wears a brown peak lapel jacket and flat-front pants with a peach cotton shirt. Illac wears a blue-gray jacket and flat-front pants with a powder blue shirt and a printed tie.

NICK wears a dark blue Nehru jacket with patch pockets. Illac wears a navy jacket with a red checkered shirt in peach skin with a convertible collar

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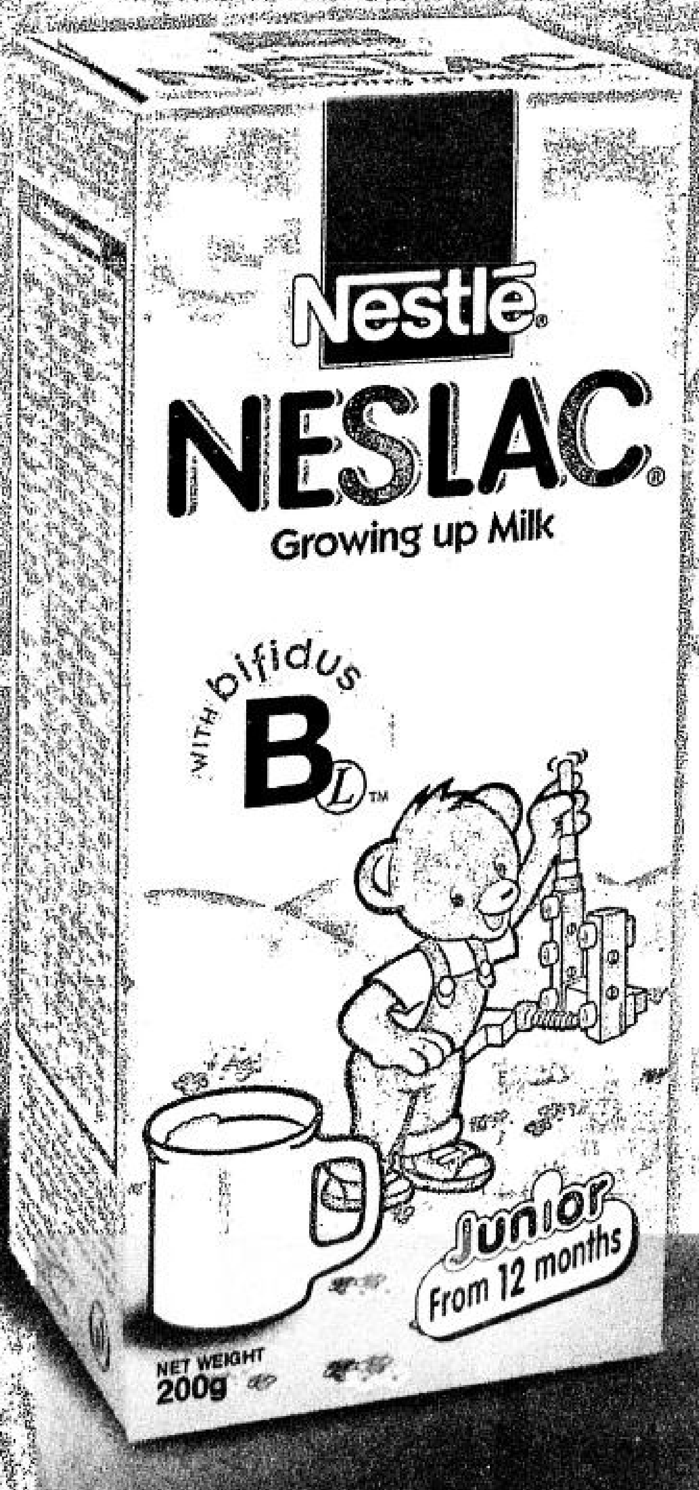

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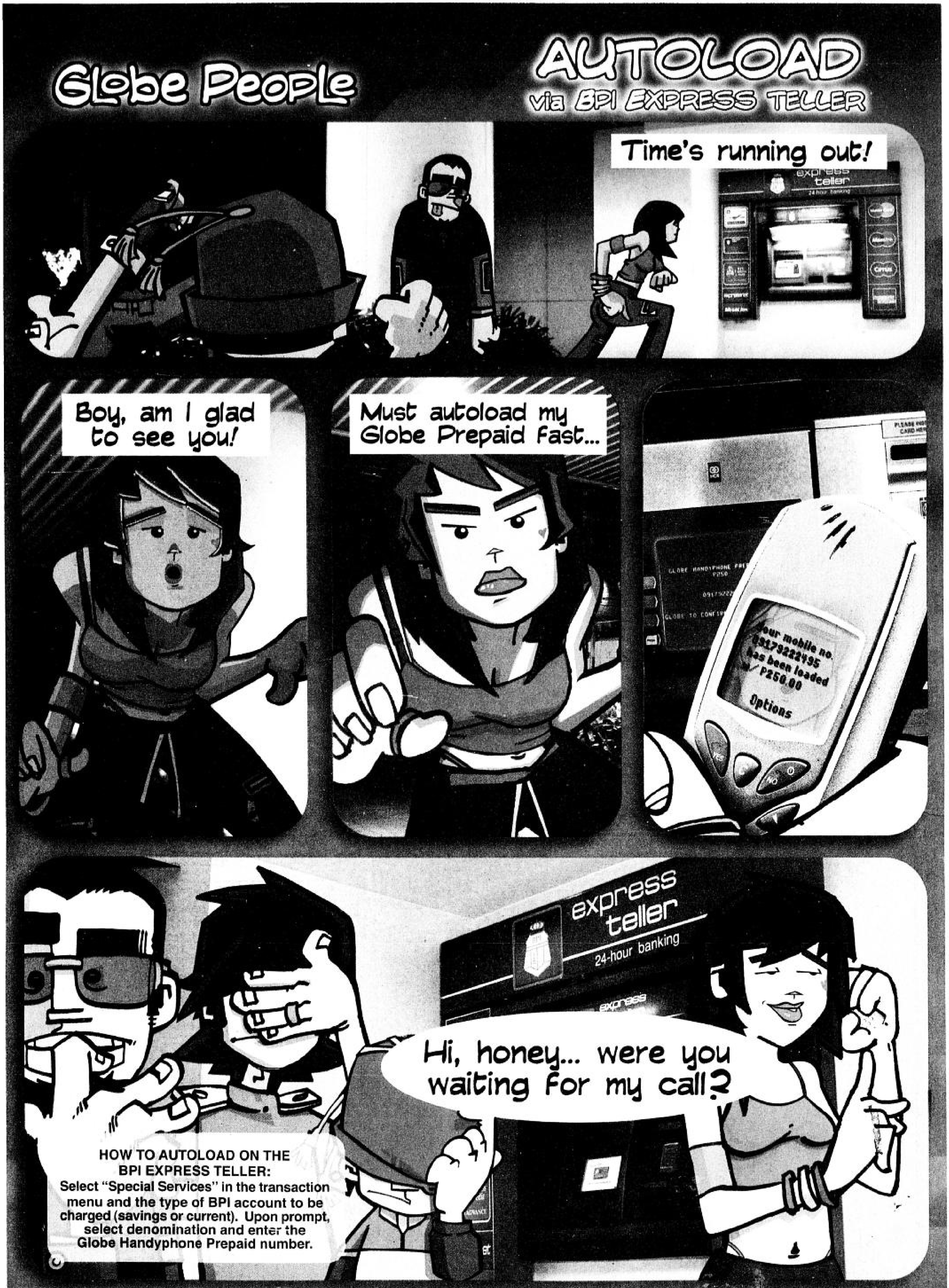
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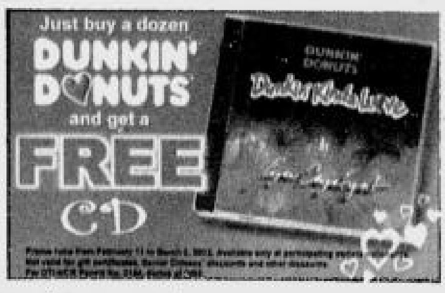
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Gardens of the world in the City of Angels

ROSES outside the Tea Room

Text and photos by Adrian Lizares

WRITING about gardens, I find myself tiring from the efforts involved in describing each and every petal or leaf. But then I simply go with the incessant clacking of the keyboard and try to hit the deadline. I also must admit that it is quite an effort to include so many green spots as I traverse this botany of a globe. But then the joys of actually reaching my destinations is enough of a reward.

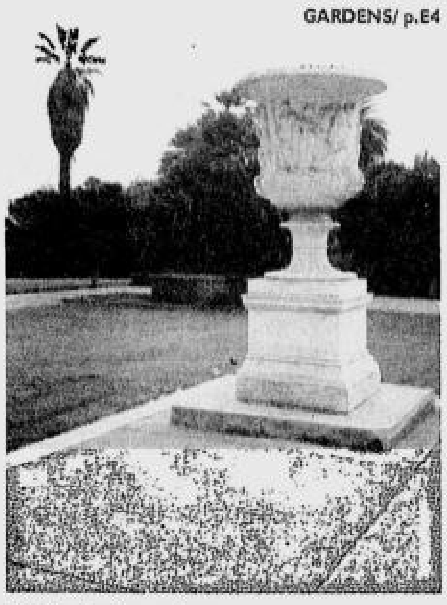
Los Angeles is, without a doubt, a favorite destination of many Filipinos. The climate there is comfortable for us who come from the tropics. The increasing numbers of Filipinos who decide to make L.A. their home is proof enough of the appeal of the city. The bias for L.A. may also be due to the straight line that runs from Manila across the Pacific, which is a natural migratory route.

Landmark

Some people dislike the place, especially those who are enamored by New York or the eastern American states. But I have never for one minute detested it. The freewheeling attitude of the Angeleños and the weather are incentives to like it. That—and the fact Hollywood is just nearby.

Situated in a very affluent part of Los Angeles just outside Pasadena is the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens. The stately entrance marks what was once Henry Edwards Huntington's residence.

GARDENS/ p.E4


ART imitating nature

The master dazzles with dolls

Story on page E6

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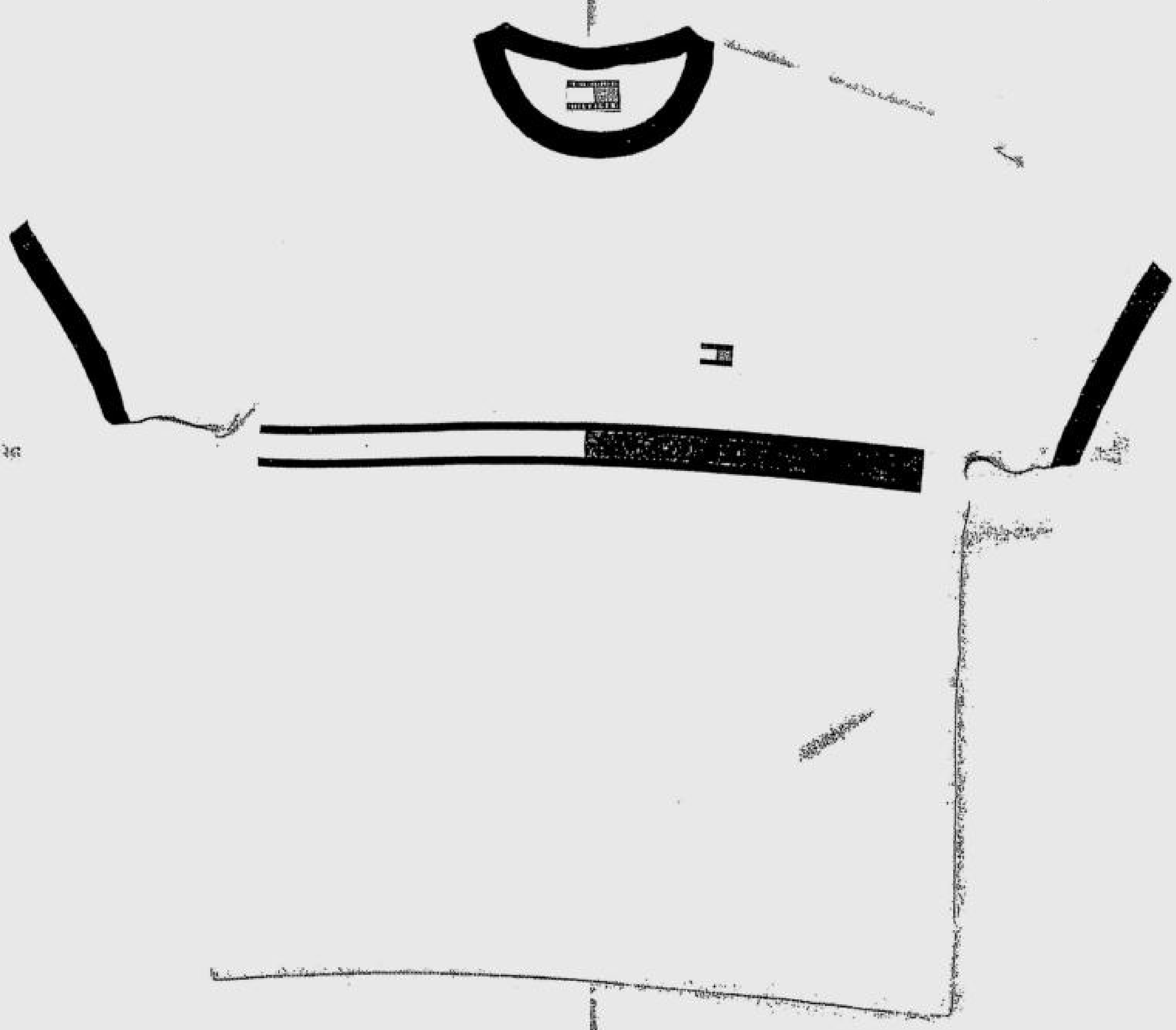

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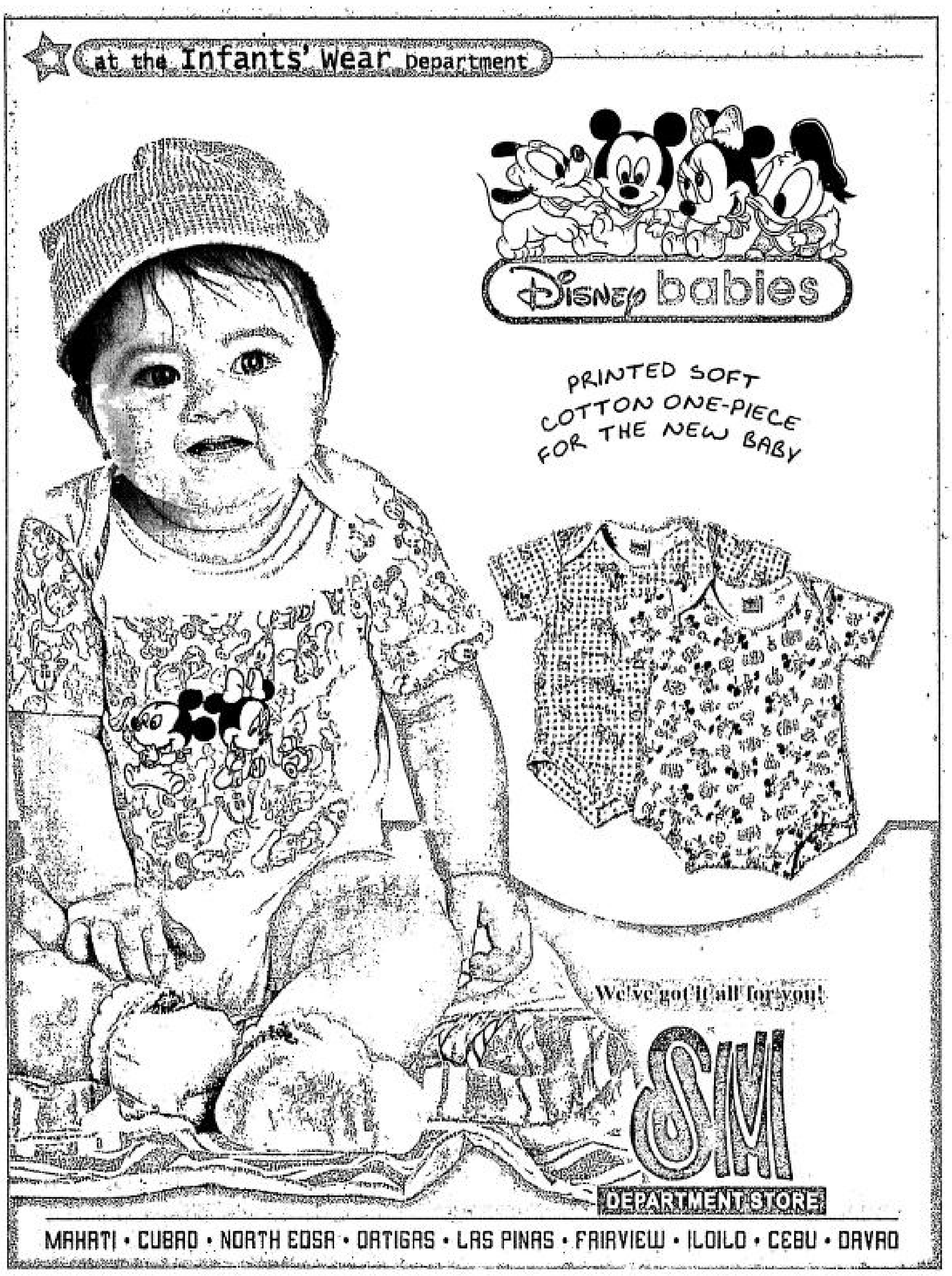
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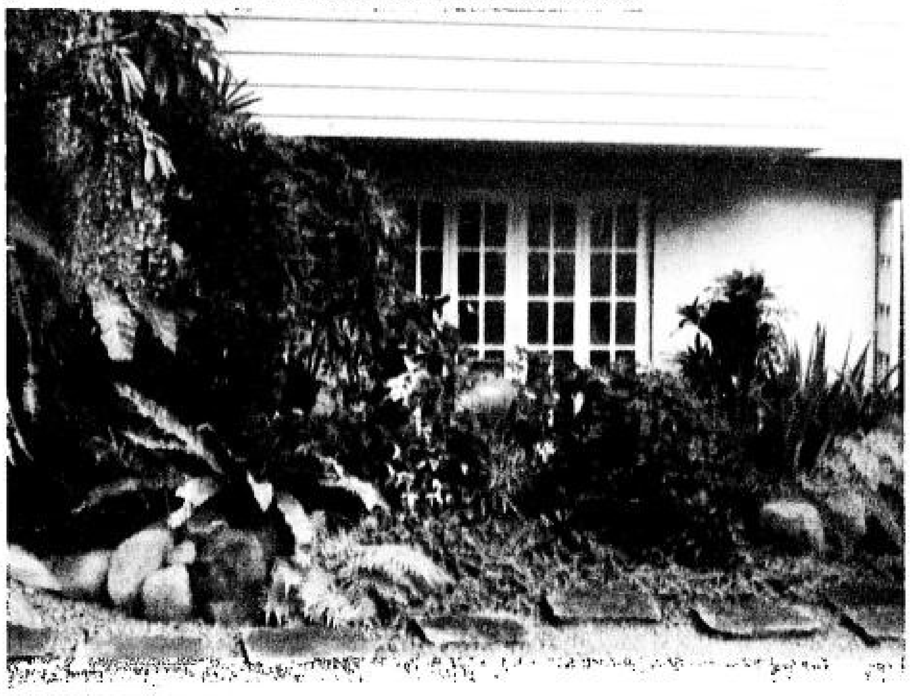


INDIGENOUS Philippine plants, antique *piedra china* and an antique jar evoke a tropical landscape that is uniquely Philippine.

Busy executive has 'green' cure for stress

By Tita V. Giron
Contributor
Photos by Chito Vecina
VISUAL CONCEPT BY ALBERT AVELLANA

> Hidden somewhere along the fringes of the commercial district, the garden of Treñas is an urban Eden

DINNER in the garden of Joe Mari Treñas is like a scene in a movie shot in some exotic tropical setting, with nightlights heightening the dramatic effect of a lawn lush with ferns, palms and frangipani (*kalachuchi*) in the background.

The garden of Coca-Cola's former vice president, a corporate lawyer by profession, is, however, no movie set. It's as real as the heavy traffic of vehicles and humans on nearby Paseo de Roxas. Not surprisingly, trees, grass cover and plants in the garden insulate the place from the suffocating pollution of bustling Makati. Hidden somewhere along the fringes of the commercial district, the garden of Treñas is an urban Eden.

Obviously a statement by its owner, the garden style is disciplined, with everything in its right place. It complements the interiors of the house where decoration is kept to a minimum. Although the landscape is profuse with plants and shrubs, you can walk around the yard without fear of tripping over something.

While the indoor décor of the house is what Treñas describes as "minimalist," the garden is undeniably luxuriant with a collection of plants from a generous assortment of tropical garden varieties. The fern family alone is represented by different types of bird's nests, nephrolepis and maidenhair. The heliconias and other ornamental ginger plants come in varied sizes and shapes. There are prayer plants, bromeliads, aroids and vines.

Garden accessories

Primitive "talking jars," *piedra china* and timeworn *traviesas* (old railroad ties) add distinct character to the tropical garden. These are the first things in the garden that catch the attention of guests.

"Back in the old days," he explained, "there were folks who believed that when they spoke to the primitive jars, they talked back. And some of them also could actually hear voices coming from the jars." The primitive pieces are in their elements right where the old—favorite scented trees and plants—are.

The antique garden accessories complement the old and modern art collection of Treñas. In his rooms, among many other art pieces, are works of Ben Cabrera, Zobel and Amorsolo.

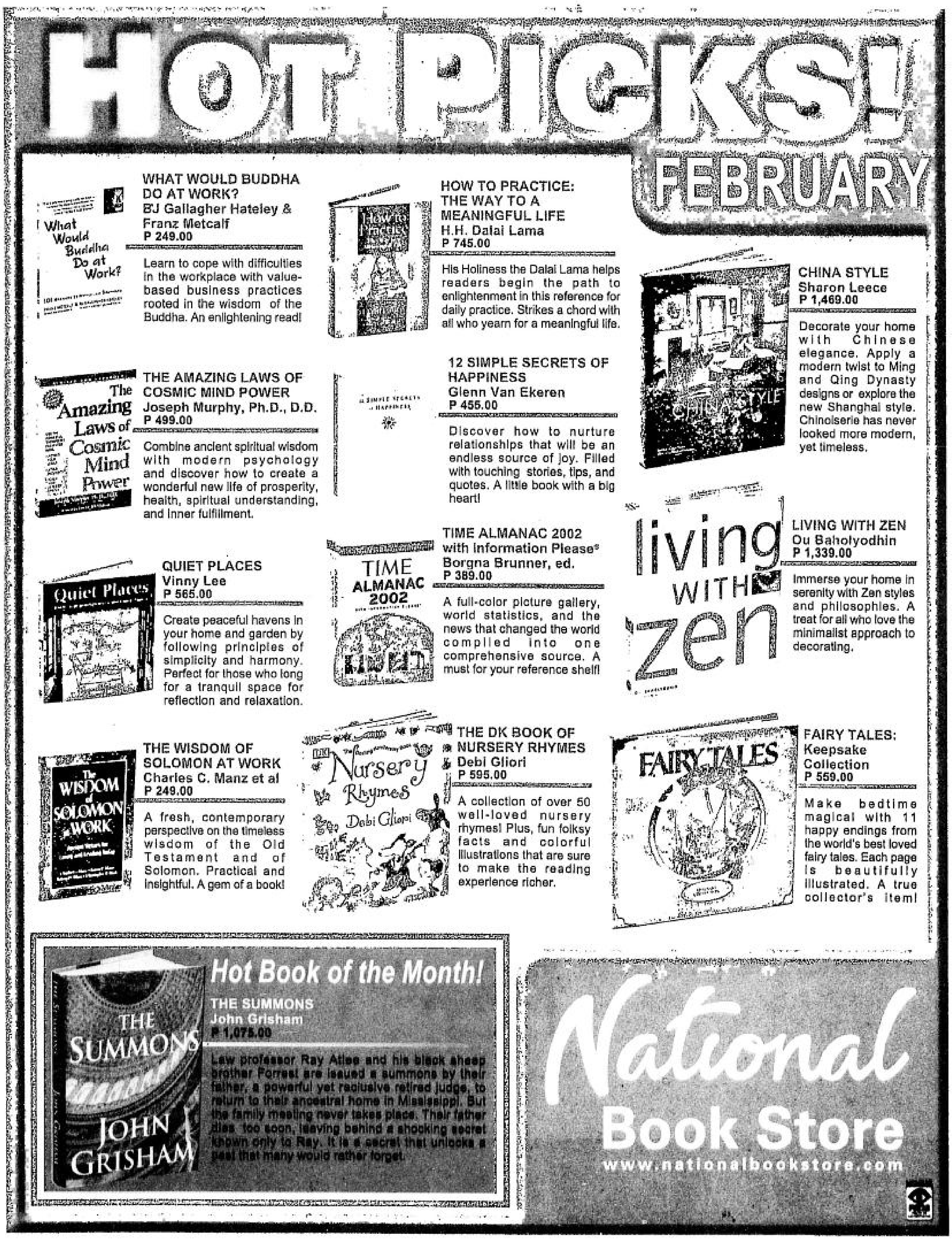
No green thumb

Besides discipline and order, Treñas has a lot to teach harassed members of the corporate world. Among his sundry activities, relaxing in a garden, aside from travel and morning workout at the gym, is a favorite "cure" for stress, aches and pains.

"You don't need a green thumb to enjoy gardening," he advised. Treñas himself is no gardener, although he would water his garden plants once in a while. But he admitted to being a garden lover, even an enthusiastic one. That he hired a top landscape artist to do

BUSY/ p.E7

ANTIQUE *piedra china* slabs serve as stepping stones.



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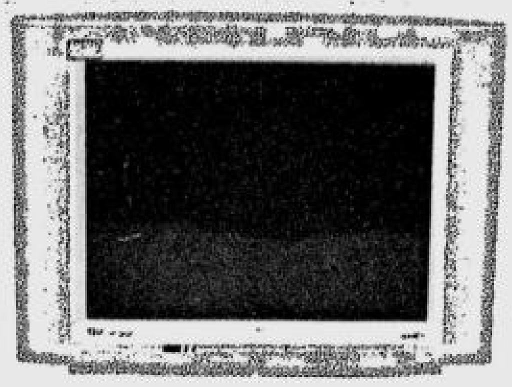

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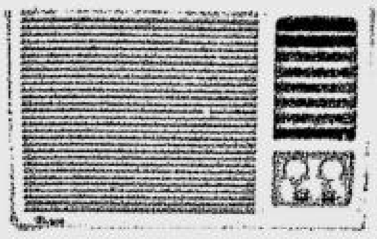

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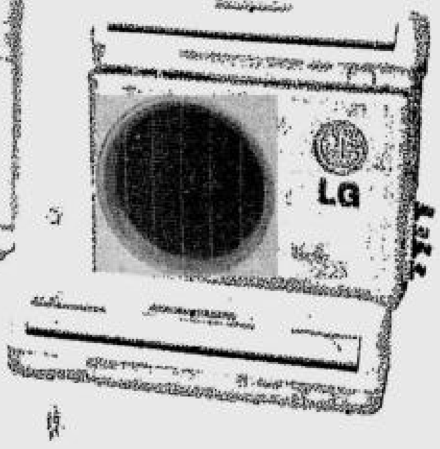

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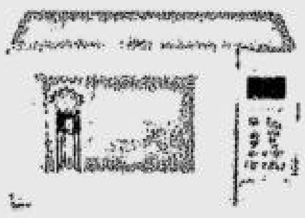

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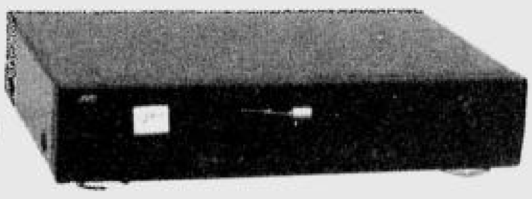

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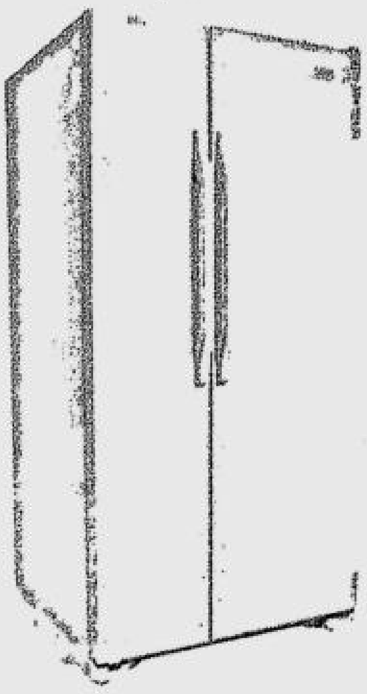

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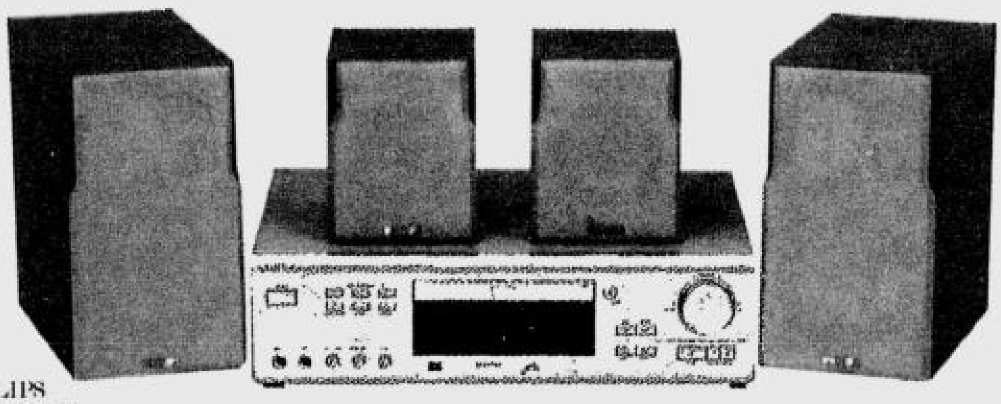

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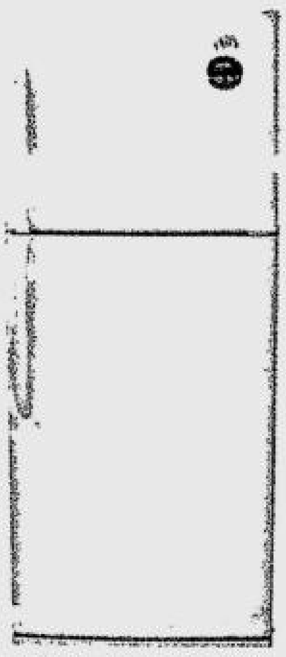

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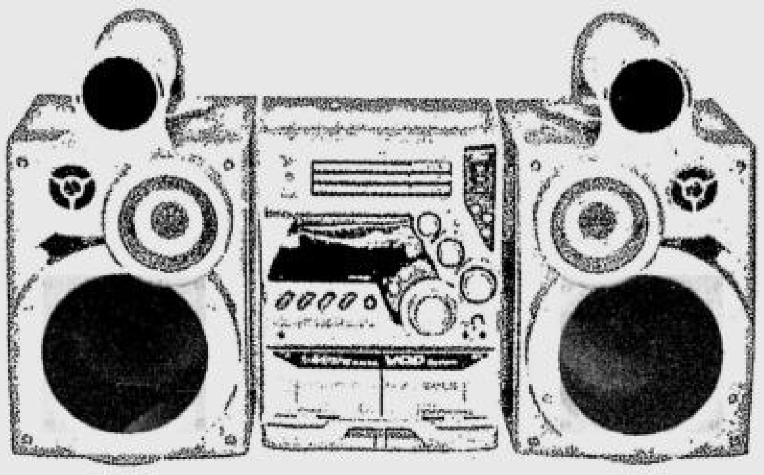

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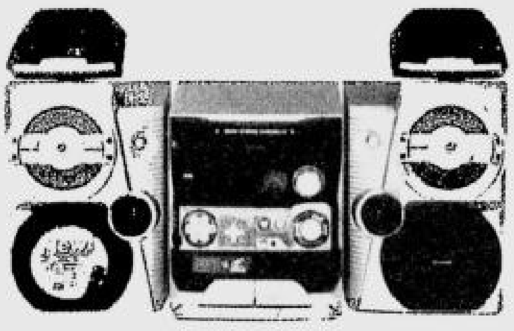

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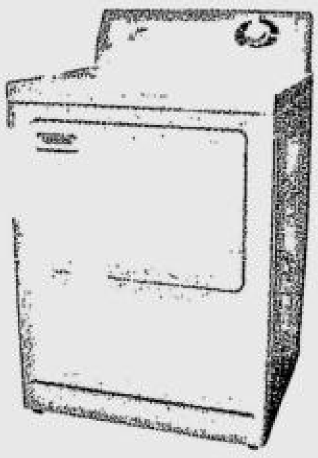

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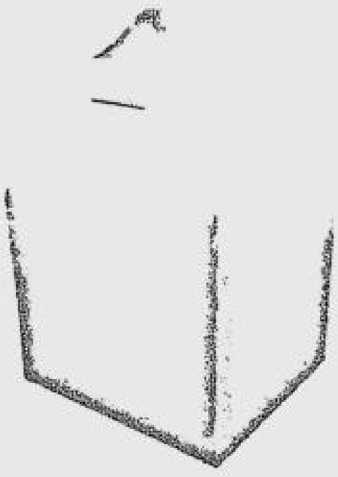

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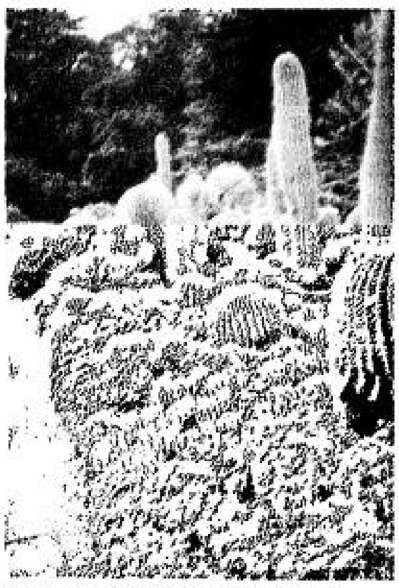
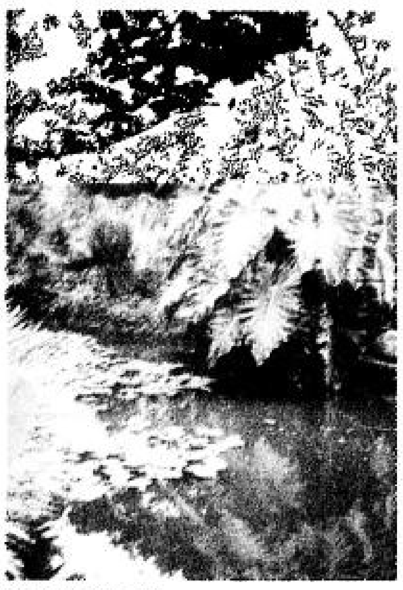


CACTI in many colors and shapes



THE LILY pond

INSIDE THE DESERT Garden

GOLD in the Japanese garden

Gardens of the world in the City of Angels

From page E1

The property occupies more than a hundred acres. It houses the celebrated library, art collection and botanical gardens. Established in 1903 and founded in 1919 by the railroad and real-estate developer and his wife, the Huntington functions today as a private, non-profit organization that is responsible for the maintenance and stewardship of Huntington's legacy. It is an important cultural and historical landmark that has been preserved and utilized for purposes of research and better understanding between peoples.

The enormity and expanse of the garden and the art collection amazed me. Inside the residence building is a large and important collection of Georgian paintings, mostly life-size portraits of British aristocracy and nobility, set in an astounding sunlit room with so many stories to tell. On display are numerous works by painters Sir Thomas Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds, who were fierce rivals during their time.

Garden themes

In the gardens is a collection of over 15,000 different species of plants. They are set in thematic order: Japanese, Australian, sub-tropical, desert, and jungle, to mention a few. My friends and I took some time to tour the place and stopped at the Rose Garden Tea Room. It was New Year's Day. The efficiency of the sandwich chef was awesome. We talked about it over our al fresco "brunch" underneath the ginkgo trees and over tomato soup.

We took a leisurely stroll afterward. We went to the alley where Italian marble sculptures (mostly 17th century) were found. It was a formal European style garden completely surrounded by camellias, which were all in bloom. The camellia (*camellia japonicus* and other species) collection consisted of about 1,300 cultivars from over a hundred species and they were all in their most glorious height, each shrub completely covered with multiple blooms in more colors than a 48-crayon box. It was difficult to decide which one was the prettiest. At this time of year the Huntington would cohost with the South California Camellia Society an annual show of the latest and most beautiful specimens of this type of flowering plant.

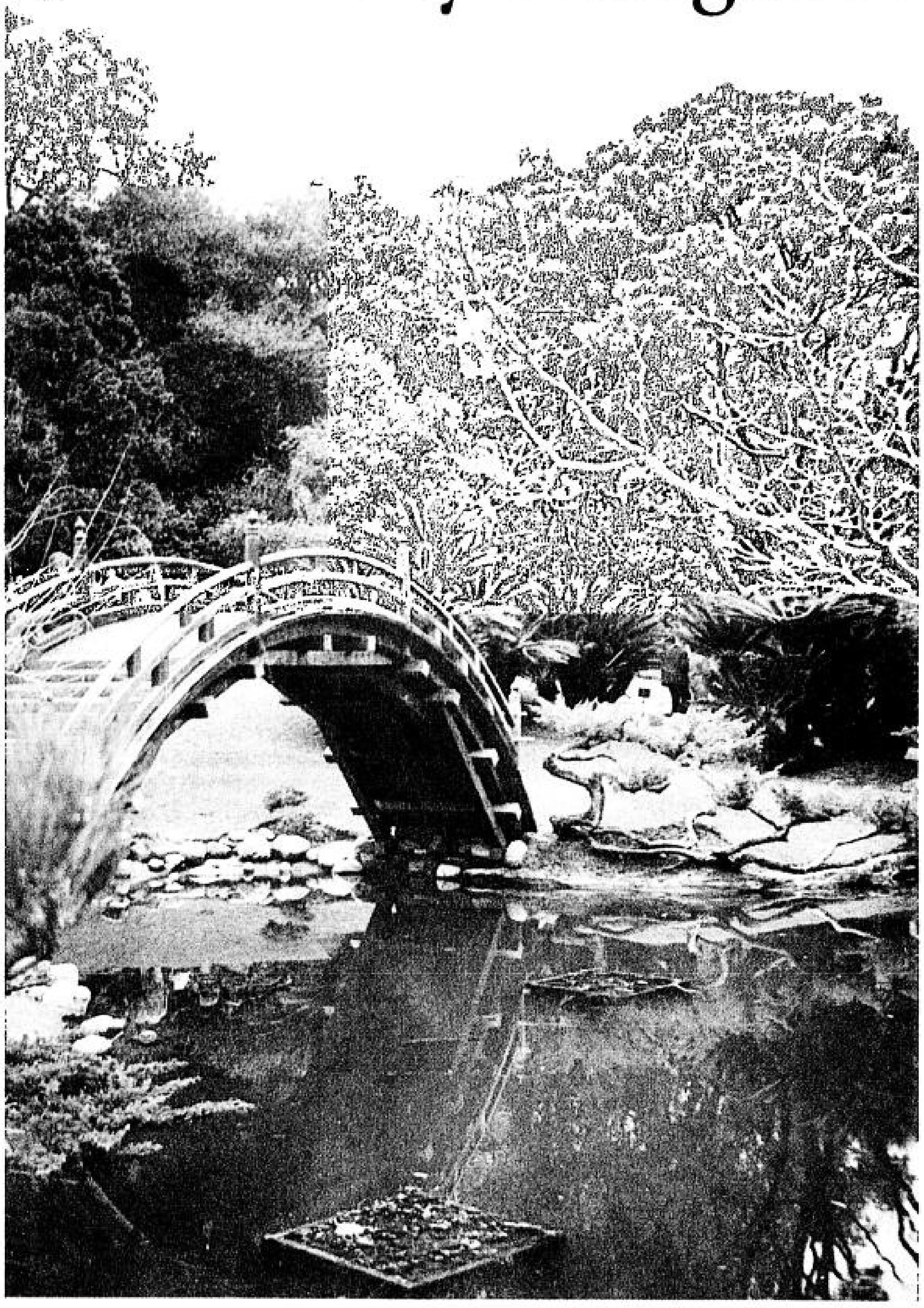
We found ourselves now in the Australian garden, which had a collection of grasses and weeds that had a very unmanicured look to it. Then we went to the Jungle garden where the big-leafed philodendrons and monsters of the forest took over the vista, vines and lianas emphasizing the point! The clearing after this area was assigned to the Palm Garden, one of the Canary Date Palms (*phoenix canariensis*) that belonged to the father of Huntington; it was balled and shipped from San Francisco in 1906 complete with fire scars from the earthquake of the same year.

Cacti

The Huntington is famous for its Desert Garden, which has 4,000 species of cacti and succulents that are arranged not to imitate the plants' habitat but in geographic order. I was surprised to see it in a movie the other day with Michelle Pfeiffer in the starring role. From the tiniest and most pungent smelling *euphorbias* to the agaves that were as old as the garden itself, I had never seen so many of strange varieties of cacti. Some even looked like they could actually walk. The Yucca towered over everything else, but the tiny ones refused to be outdone and had a certain majesty of their own.

STRELIZIAS **galore**

The Huntington Botanical Gardens impresses with its magnificent survey of the plant world in whatever climate and geography

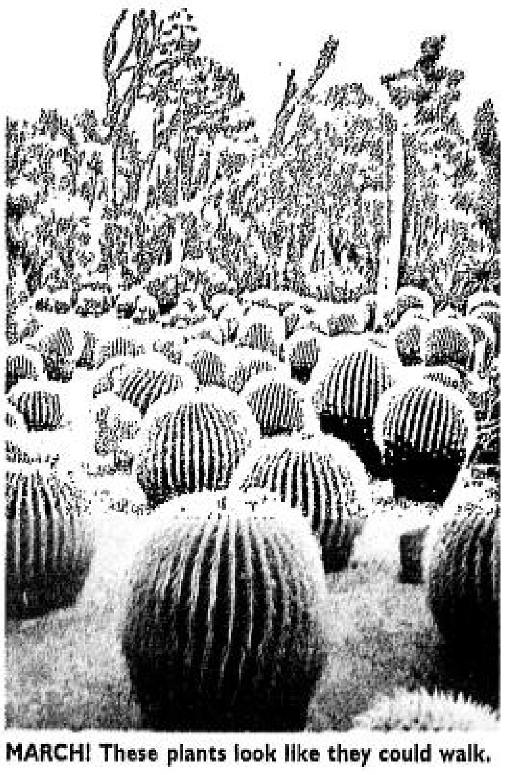


THE MOON Bridge

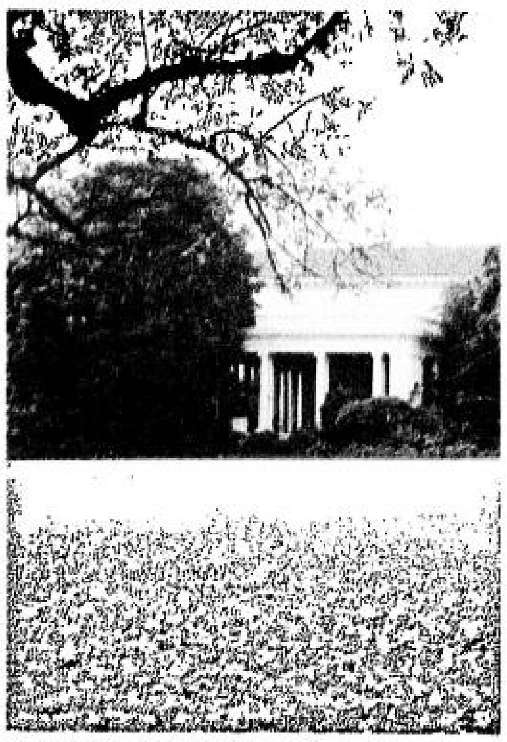
Finally, the Japanese Garden whose entrance was marked by a thicket of bamboo trees that made an interesting barrier of green poles that covered the entire perimeter of the garden. A pair of stone lion-dogs marked the entrance. Cedars and other evergreens clustered around the Moon Bridge, which was the most photographed area of the entire garden. This was a busy corner with children trying to fish out the koi from the pond and tour guides explaining the Japanese house.

Huntington is now constructing a Chinese garden in a 12-acre plot. It is funded by a $10 million bequest by a prominent Los Angeles philanthropist. It will be completed by 2004.

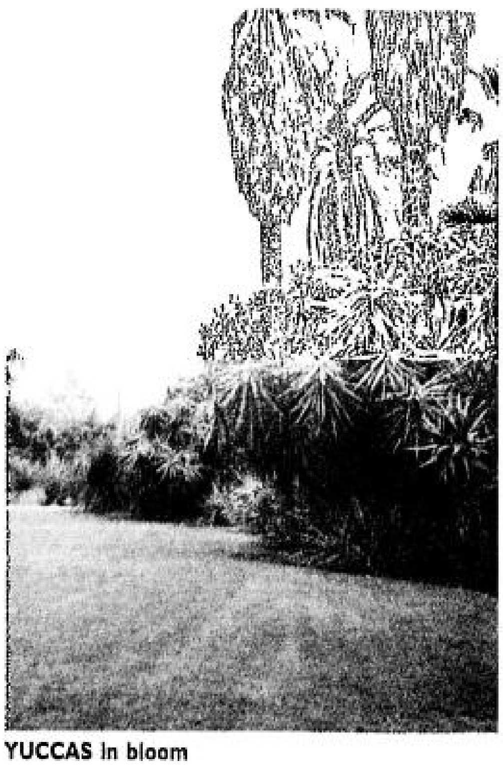
Special events are lined up throughout the year. Education is the main priority of Huntington. It aims to foster plant appreciation, especially among the young, for a better understanding of botany and for simple everyday enjoyment.



MARCH! These plants look like they could walk.



A PEEK into the residence of Henry Edwards Huntington



YUCCAS in bloom

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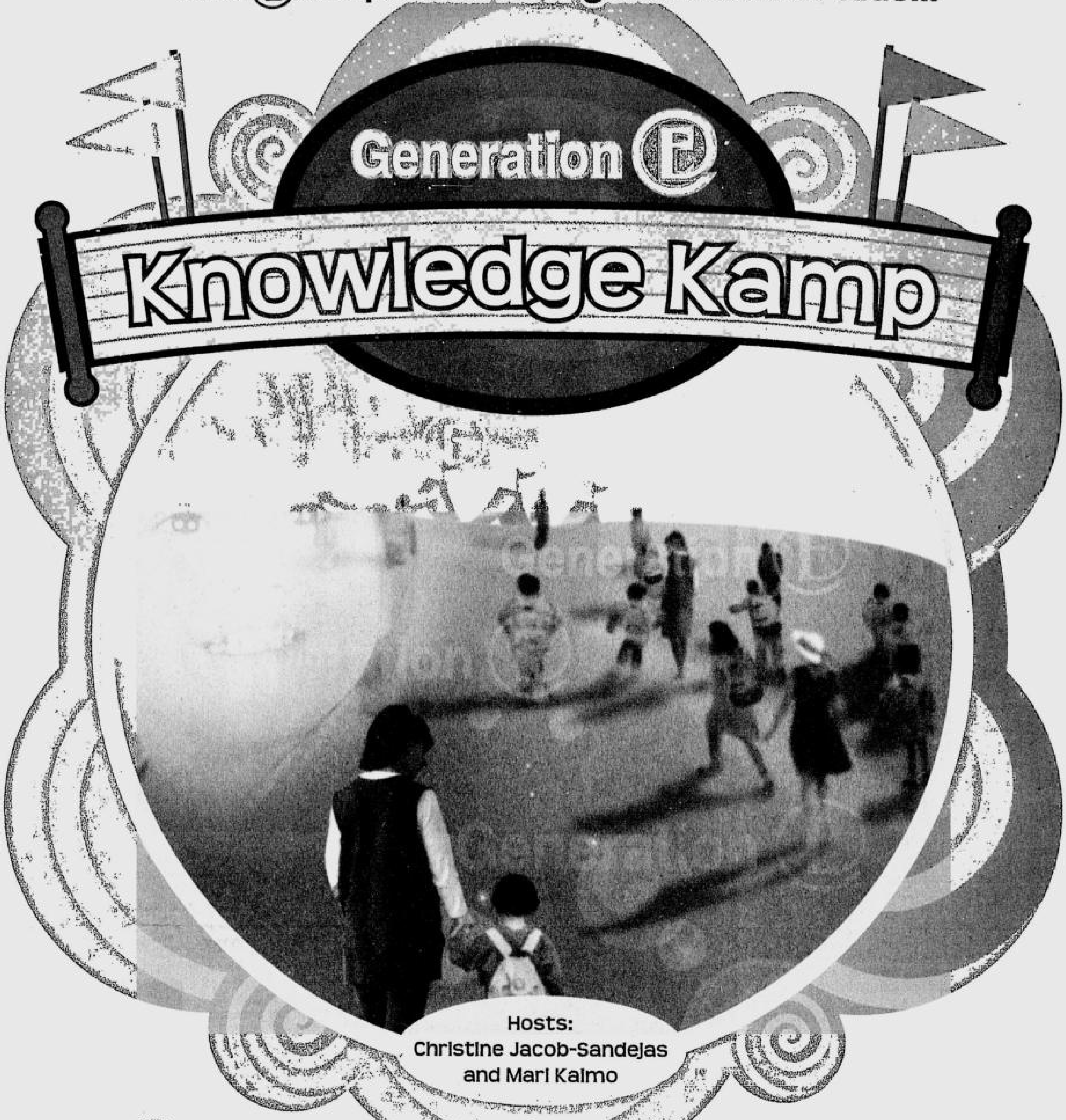
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THE BRIDE goes Filipiniana in a *traje de mestiza*. From the Maharlika collection, this $850-doll wears a *piña* gown with *callado*.

The master dazzles with dolls

In this world where a Barbie is sold every two seconds, Anton Buencamino has found the antidote to the quick and disposable. What he creates are not playthings but individual works of art

By Bea P. Valdes
Contributor

IN AN ERA undeniably post-Mattel, there is no safety when you detonate the word "doll." The feminist movement offers inoculation against such a label. These are strange days, where little girls can grow up to be one of the boys. And boys don't have to grow up: Rock stars rule. They build their towers of records. Queen means Freddy Mercury is rising. And childhood keeps coming unraveled on Oprah.

Catchphrases define our ideas. Plastic is fantastic. Every little byte helps. We skyrocket forward, leaving skid marks on the info superhighway. In our speed, we fly past Peter Pan. We try to escape his "eternal return to the same." We grow old without growing up. When we do age (for we must), no one wants to admit to being a tinkered belle.

In this world, every two seconds, a Barbie is sold. That's a purchase each heartbeat, a life in miniature. There must be an antidote to the quick and disposable.

Details

Anton Buencamino has found it. It's the principle of treasure: discovered in the "details, details, details" of a vision. He uses a slow simmering story, something unique, carefully crafted. He creates couture dolls, which are not playthings, but individual works of art. To ensure that no two will be alike, each one is tended to and painted by hand. These dolls sport festooned headpieces or tasseled trains, filigree belts or robes of Chinese brocade. Whereas other toys flash then fade, Anton takes his time and imagination on a slow flight. He attaches to each doll a history. He gives them their own memory and its complicated devices.

This is evident in his Coceaux La Fontaine Collection. Coceaux is more than just a study in coquetry in the days of the Roaring '20s. She journeys from a small town in France to Paris on the verge of Art Deco.

Anton presents us a view from a hall of mirrors: Her travels to Africa, a visit with the empress of China, to the Taj Mahal, a trip to Rio's carnival, an evening in Moscow, a night in Morocco and more. On one end, we have the imagined "Adventures of Coceaux." On the other, is the whirlwind that she has actually stirred up in the collecting world.

In just a year after Manika Inc. had introduced her, she has already been featured as "cover girl" in doll magazines. There have been numerous features about her and Anton. But this has been more that just the creation of the new "it" girl in the valley of the dolls.

Anton has completed a doll that has been auctioned off for the benefit of For the Love of Children (FLOC), and another whose proceeds went to a children's hospital. He is also sponsoring an event that invites local South Florida fashion students to design ensembles for Coceaux. The winning entries are to be featured in collectors' magazines and will be exhibited in the International Doll Exposition. Again, there is a reflection of sorts, as Anton himself placed third in a similar competition.

Passion

After his "Last Empress of China" garnered praises, people were clamoring for his art. This pleasant response led him into serious doll crafting. Although some of his pieces have sold for $800, he still does not "consider this to be a business, but a passion that I enjoy."

This passion is what transforms an object into a collectible subject.

Having graduated summa cum laude in fashion, and having his creative talents acknowledged by Oscar de la Renta, Anton is often asked why he switched from haute couture to couture dolls. "The answer is simple," he writes. "Dolls never complain about their fittings!"

Anton Buencamino, as doll master, wakes up the imagination of collectors and paints exotic cities and jeweled balls. Then there is another view, one that is not make-believe. His dolls give back to children, stretching out that dream a little longer. It's a sweet twist and a welcome beginning for a modern fairy tale.

(For details of the dolls, write to Manika Inc. P.O. Box 4730 Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, 33338 or e-mail Manika867@cs.com or fax (954)566-3410.

"LIBERTÉ" was originally made as a Christmas tree top angel

"A NIGHT in Moscow." Glamorous boa finishes off the mustard brocade asymmetrical gown with turnazul beads and a burgundy lace train.

"LAST Empress of China" placed third in the Barbie Bazaar makeover competition

COCEAUX La Fontaine was born in the early 1900s in a small farm town in France. One day her childhood friend Jacques returned from Paris and discovered this beautiful flower vendor. He recognized Coceaux and asked her to be a part of his exhibition at a Paris Gallery. During the opening night, Coceaux was transformed into the belle of the ball, wearing a gold French brocade evening dress with a long double-layered train on the side held by delicate beadwork.

ANTON Buencamino and his Coceaux La Fontaine Doll Collection. The Florida-based Filipino designer has created an early 1900s period fashion doll for collectors.

BROMELIADS, palms, ferns and vines are showcased in the tropical garden designed by Shirley Sanders.

ANTIQUE jar is displayed as accent in the tropical garden.

STAGHORN ferns are displayed in the pocket garden off the den.

THE TRUNK of a *kalachuchi* tree is huge with ferns and vines.

Busy executive has 'green' cure for stress

From page E2

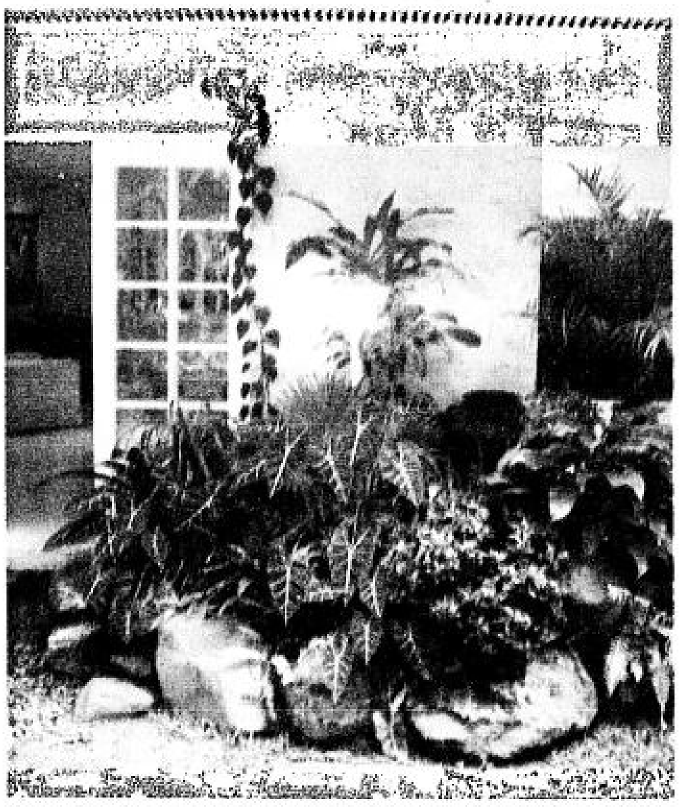
his garden does not come as a surprise.

He hired Shirley Sanders, one of the better-known landscape artists in the country, to arrange his garden. "I need a garden around my home. I practically grew up surrounded by the gardens of my mother and my *lola*," he admitted. Sanders must have been so pleased with the tropical garden she designed that she featured the picture-pretty work in the latest edition of her coffee-table book, "The Philippine Garden by Sanders." (Available at National Bookstore, or call Sanders' office at 728-5271/5346.)

"I was influenced by my grandmother who so loved gardening that she had one at home and another in the farm." He recalled his *lola's* many scented plants and trees. "And that is why my garden has those old favorites—*champaca*, jasmine and *dama de noche*. They do remind me of my *lola's* garden in Iloilo."

Treñas said that when he invited close friends for dinner, they invariably noticed the fragrant scent of the flowers in the garden. "They're great for unwinding," he added. And with the fragrant nocturnal flowers greeting him when he comes home at night, who needs stress pills after a hectic day?

E-mail author at mariettagiron@hotmail.com



AN ANTIQUE carabao jar is shown amid the ferns and bromeliads. Partially seen is Ang Kiukok's "Pieta" in the living room.

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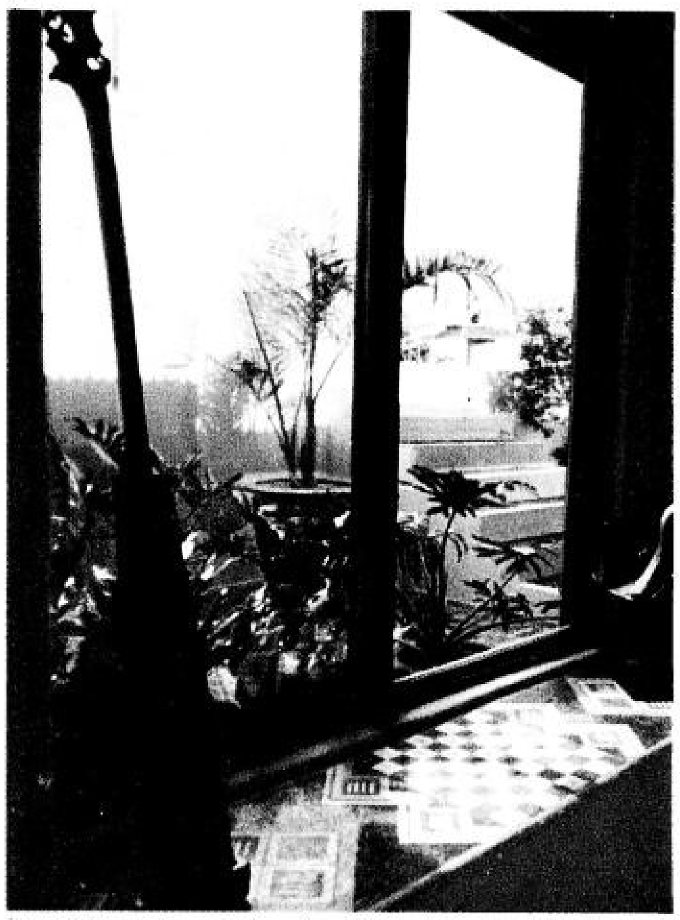
LIFESTYLE

Home

Color his world

STORY ON PAGE F6



RECESSED window seat is painted like an ethnic chessboard. The patterns provide rhythm and entertain the eye. The owner instinctively creates visual contrast with the length of the Chinese oar and the roundness of the Muslim saddle.

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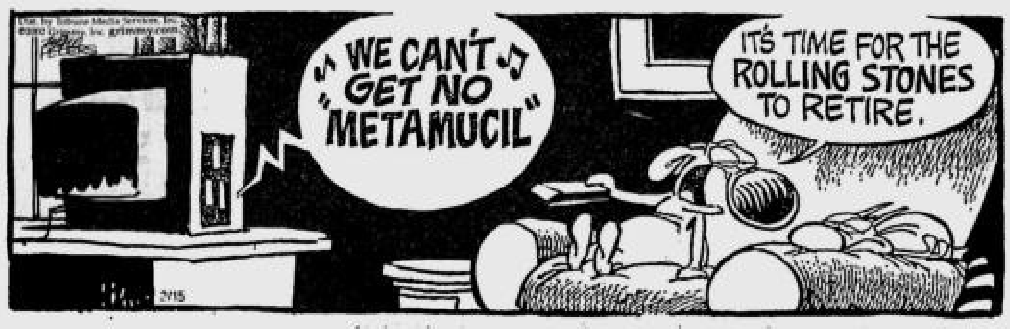
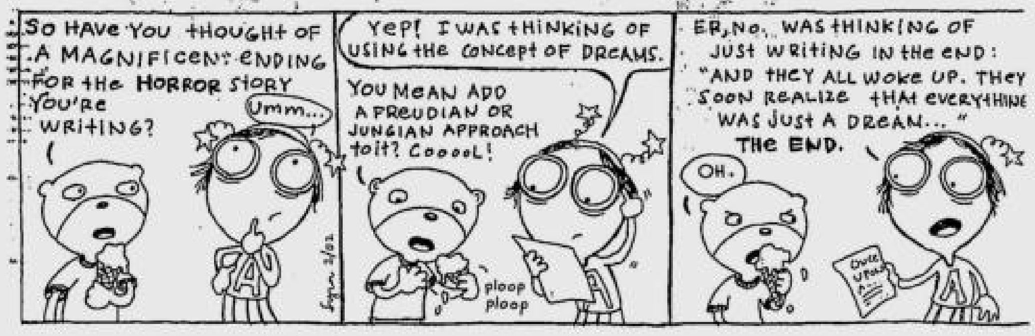
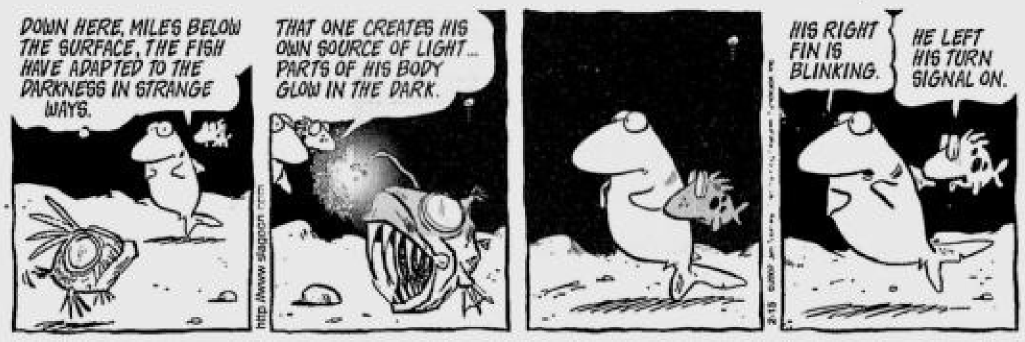
MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM
BY MIKE PETERS


WE CAN'T GET NO "METAMUCIL"
IT'S TIME FOR THE ROLLING STONES TO RETIRE.
2/15

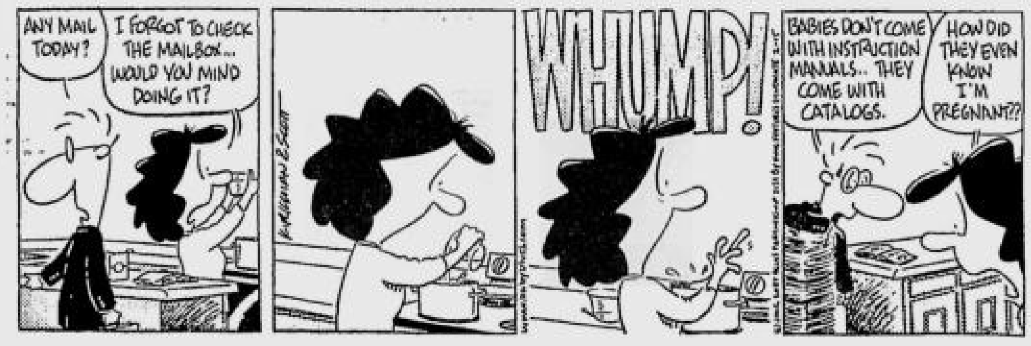
ATOMO AND WEBOY
BY LYRA GARCELLANO


SO HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF A MAGNIFICENT ENDING FOR THE HORROR STORY YOU'RE WRITING?
Umm...
YEP! I WAS THINKING OF USING THE CONCEPT OF DREAMS.
YOU MEAN ADD A FREUDIAN OR JUNGIAN APPROACH TO IT? COOOOL!
ploop ploop
ER, NO. WAS THINKING OF JUST WRITING IN THE END: "AND THEY ALL WOKE UP. THEY SOON REALIZE THAT EVERYTHING WAS JUST A DREAM..." THE END.
OH.

SHERMAN'S LAGOON
BY JIM TOOMEY


DOWN HERE, MILES BELOW THE SURFACE, THE FISH HAVE ADAPTED TO THE DARKNESS IN STRANGE WAYS.
THAT ONE CREATES HIS OWN SOURCE OF LIGHT... PARTS OF HIS BODY GLOW IN THE DARK.
HIS RIGHT FIN IS BLINKING.
HE LEFT HIS TURN SIGNAL ON.
http://www.slagoon.com

BABY BLUES
BY JERRY SCOTT


ANY MAIL TODAY?
I FORGOT TO CHECK THE MAILBOX... WOULD YOU MIND DOING IT?
WHUMP!
BABIES DON'T COME WITH INSTRUCTION MANUALS.. THEY COME WITH CATALOGS.
HOW DID THEY EVEN KNOW I'M PREGNANT??

HOROSCOPE
BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jane Seymour, Brandon Boyd, Renee O'Connor, Matt Groening

Happy Birthday: Greater interaction with other family members will result in a closer bond this year. You will become emotional if you have a concern with family finances but if you put your mind to it you can turn your financial situation around. Believe in yourself and push your plans into motion. Your numbers are 7, 12, 22, 34, 38, 45

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Get involved in investments that you know will pay off. Real estate will be profitable. Your involvement in groups will bring you added popularity

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Take an early look at your taxes and find ways to invest wisely and save yourself some money. Don't let someone you work with cause emotional upset.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Relationships will be going through changes. Acceptance will be the key to moving forward in a positive manner. You will find yourself involved in a worthy cause.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Don't let anyone get the better of you today. You may be emotional and overreact to comments made if you aren't careful.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You've got the goods, so go after your goals. It's time to revamp your financial future. Your popularity will grow if you are generous and sincere in your gestures of friendliness.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You should be taking a closer look at your financial situation. You may need to update some of your investments or your personal papers. Don't let your health suffer

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Partnerships may not go according to plan. If something doesn't work out, it will be to your benefit in the long run. Bide your time.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): You can make gains if you socialize with colleagues, clients or employers today. Your genuine warmth and sincere desire to lend a helping hand will be your ticket to future advancement.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You'll be in a social mood, so make sure that you have lots of entertaining plans made in advance. You will dazzle those around you with your wit, charm and worldly knowledge.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Be careful: The emotional well-being of those you have to deal with may be close to the edge. Proceed with caution instead of having regrets later.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You have so much to offer so stop sitting back and letting everyone else enjoy the praise that you should be receiving. Take the initiative and step into a leadership position.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Take your time and refrain from letting anyone put too many responsibilities on your shoulders. You have a good heart but that doesn't mean you should let others take advantage of you.

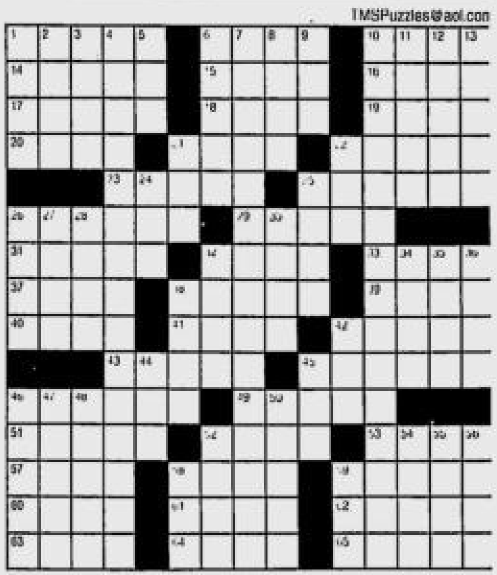
Birthday Baby: You have no problem dealing with others. You intuitively know what others need and therefore should achieve tremendous success throughout your life.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Hindu teacher
6 Male deer
10 Lemon drinks
14 Rod of tennis
15 __ En-lai
16 Brusque
17 Curved moldings
18 Dollars for quarters
19 Protagonist
20 Impudent
21 Ashen
22 "Loot" playwright
23 Come together
25 Baltimore bird
26 Orator executed by Octavian
29 Relocates
31 While broadcasting
32 Fashion
33 Excursion
37 Glance over
38 Greasy spoon
39 Lion's locks
40 Soaks up rays
41 Ceases
42 Extent
43 "A League of __ Own"
45 Quicker
46 Sounded the hour
49 Conforms
51 Hunter of stars
52 Light on one's feet
53 Melody
57 Bean curd
58 Bogus
59 Tunneled
60 Opposing position
61 Dust Bowl migrant
62 Inert gas
63 Setback
64 Funny Foxx
65 Serengeti predator

DOWN
1 Pig vittles
2 Pay figure
3 State with conviction
4 1944 Garland Yuletide musical
5 Tax grp.
6 Scrawny one
7 1951 musical featuring "Silver Bells"
8 Top-drawer
9 Type of reaction?
10 1981 Jean Shepherd Yuletide movie
11 Because of
12 Flynn of films
13 "JFK" director
21 In favor of
22 Mineral deposit
24 Go wrong
25 Above
26 Amount paid
27 Andes people
28 "Misery" star
30 Pindar works
32 Brief skirt
34 Go on a tirade
35 "Come Back, Little Sheba" dramatist
36 Ibsen drama, "__ Gynt"
38 Title paper
42 Beam
44 Farm layer
45 Eccentric
46 Aggregate
47 University of Maine location
48 Glasgow elevators
50 Produce young
52 For Pete's __!
54 Exhort
55 Dodge model
56 Writer O'Brien
58 In place of
59 Scrooge word

TMSPuzzles@aol.con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43 44 45
46 47 48 49 50
51 52 53 54 55 56
57 58 59
60 61 62
63 64 65

By D.J. DeChristopher
Staten Island, NY

12/31/0

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

M	A	S	T	E	R	E	D		A	S	L	A	N	T
I	N	C	A	M	E	R	A		S	C	O	R	E	R
S	T	A	T	U	A	R	Y		P	A	R	T	L	Y
C	E	R	T		M	O	R	B	I	D	N	E	S	S
A	N	I	L	E		R	O	A	R	S		M	O	T
S	N	E	E	R		S	O	S	A		D	I	N	E
T	A	R	T	A	R		M	E	T		U	S	S	R
			A	S	E	A		S	E	P	T			
P	E	E	L		A	L	B		D	I	C	K	E	R
L	O	P	E		D	O	E	S		C	H	I	V	E
A	L	I		H	I	N	D	U		T	U	N	E	S
C	I	T	R	O	N	E	L	L	A		N	E	R	O
A	T	H	O	M	E		A	F	F	E	C	T	E	R
T	H	E	B	E	S		M	U	R	A	L	I	S	T
E	S	T	E	R	S		P	R	O	T	E	C	T	S

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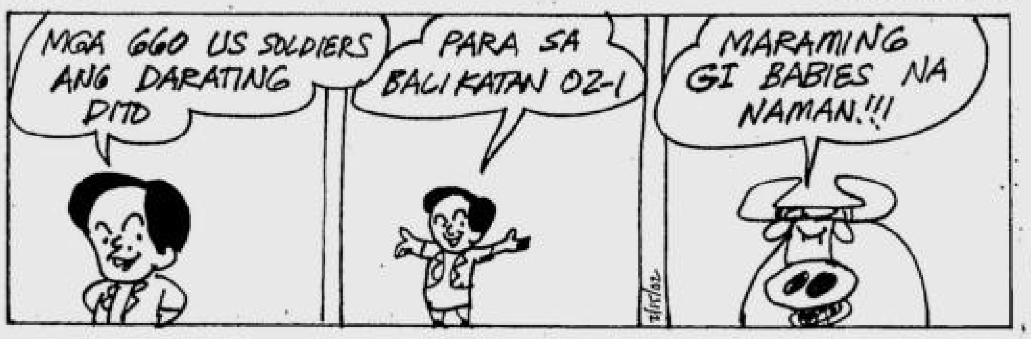
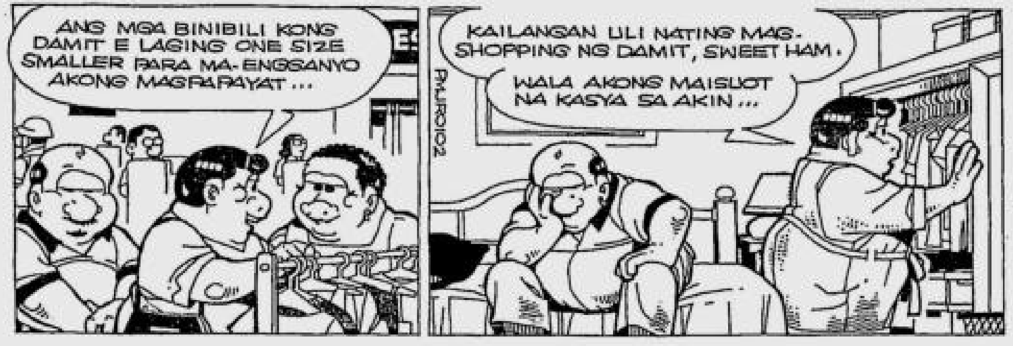
12/31/0

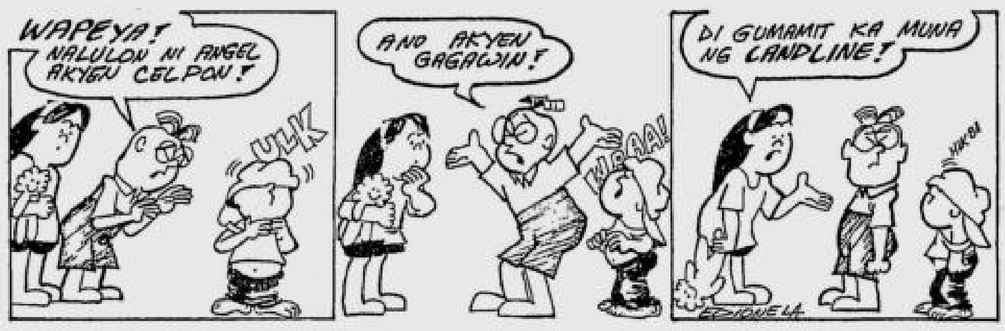
A. LIPIN
BY JESS ABRERA


MGA 660 US SOLDIERS ANG DARATING DITO
PARA SA BALIKATAN 02-1
MARAMING GI BABIES NA NAMAN.!!!

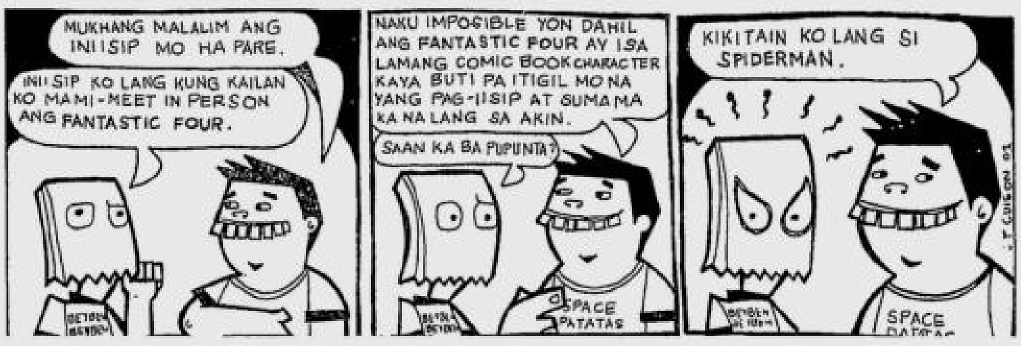
PUGAD BABOY
BY P.M. JUNIOR


ANG MGA BINIBILI KONG DAMIT E LAGING ONE SIZE SMALLER PARA MA-ENGGANYO AKONG MAGPAPAYAT...
KAILANGAN ULI NATING MAG-SHOPPING NG DAMIT, SWEET HAM.
WALA AKONG MAISUOT NA KASYA SA AKIN...

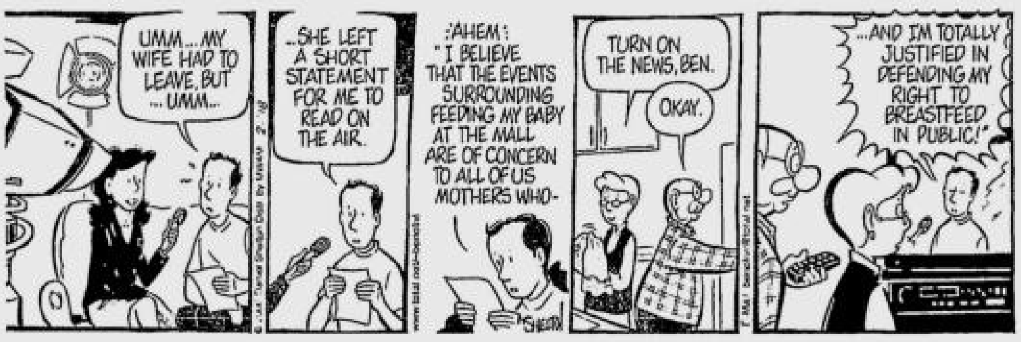
SIMO
BY EDGAR DIONELA


WAPEYA! NALULON NI ANGEL AKYEN CELPON!
ULK
ANO AKYEN GAGAWIN!
WAAA!
DI GUMAMIT KA MUNA NG CANDLINE!
DIONELA

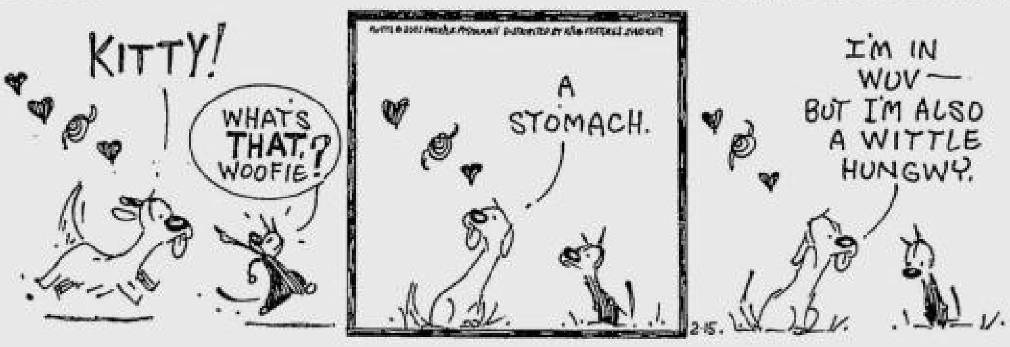
GARAPATA BLOOD
BY JOHN PAUL CUISON


MUKHANG MALALIM ANG INIISIP MO HA PARE.
INIISIP KO LANG KUNG KAILAN KO MAMI-MEET IN PERSON ANG FANTASTIC FOUR.
NAKU IMPOSIBLE YON DAHIL ANG FANTASTIC FOUR AY ISA LAMANG COMIC BOOK CHARACTER KAYA BUTI PA ITIGIL MO NA YANG PAG-IISIP AT SUMAMA KA NA LANG SA AKIN.
SAAN KA BA PUPUNTA?
KIKITAIN KO LANG SI SPIDERMAN.
SPACE PATATAS

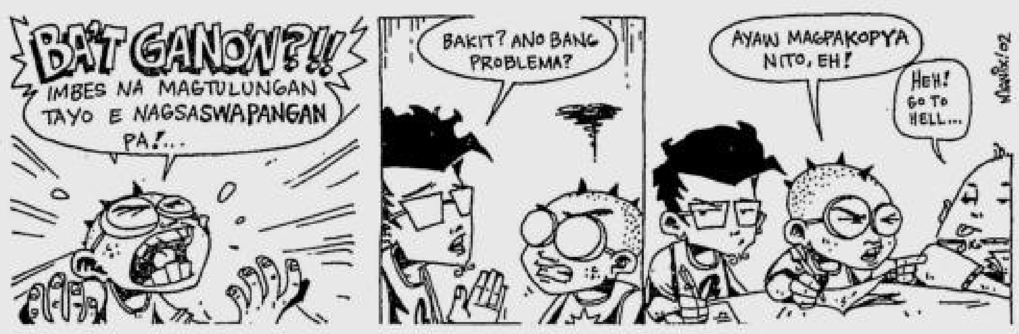
BEN
BY DANIEL SHELTON


UMM...MY WIFE HAD TO LEAVE, BUT ...UMM...
...SHE LEFT A SHORT STATEMENT FOR ME TO READ ON THE AIR.
:AHEM: "I BELIEVE THAT THE EVENTS SURROUNDING FEEDING MY BABY AT THE MALL ARE OF CONCERN TO ALL OF US MOTHERS WHO-
TURN ON THE NEWS, BEN.
OKAY.
...AND I'M TOTALLY JUSTIFIED IN DEFENDING MY RIGHT TO BREASTFEED IN PUBLIC!"

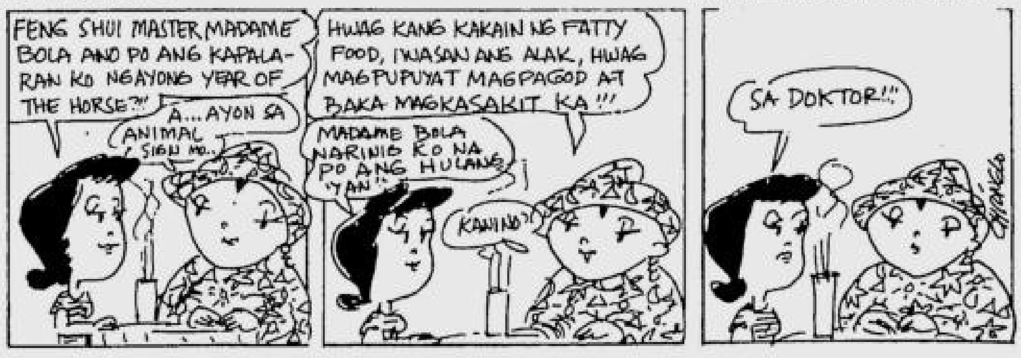
MUTTS
BY PATRICK McDONNELL


KITTY!
WHAT'S THAT, WOOFIE?
A STOMACH.
I'M IN WUV— BUT I'M ALSO A WITTLE HUNGWY.
2-15.

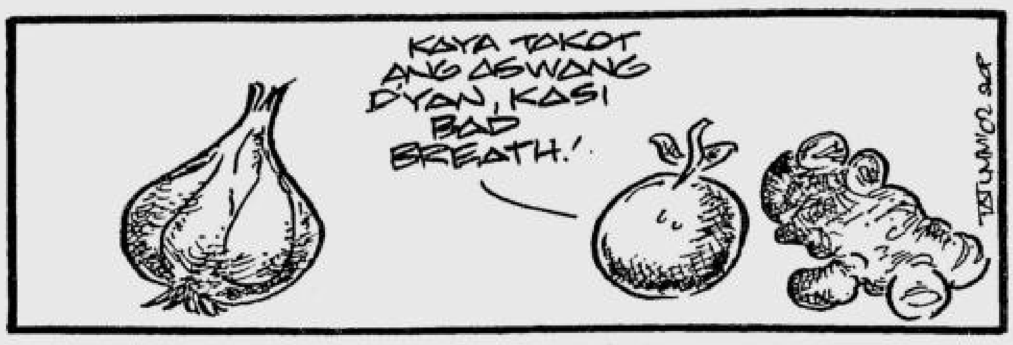
KIKO MACHINE
BY MANIX ABRERA


BA'T GANON?!!
IMBES NA MAGTULUNGAN TAYO E NAGSASWAPANGAN PA!...
BAKIT? ANO BANG PROBLEMA?
AYAW MAGPAKOPYA NITO, EH!
HEH! GO TO HELL...

LOVEKNOTS
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


FENG SHUI MASTER MADAME BOLA ANO PO ANG KAPALARAN KO NGAYONG YEAR OF THE HORSE?!
A...AYON SA ANIMAL SIGN MO..
HUWAG KANG KAKAIN NG FATTY FOOD, IWASAN ANG ALAK, HUWAG MAGPUPUYAT MAGPAGOD AT BAKA MAGKASAKIT KA!!!
MADAME BOLA NARINIG KO NA PO ANG HULANG YAN!
KANINO?
SA DOKTOR!!

TULDOK
BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


KAYA TAKOT ANG ASWANG D'YAN, KASI BAD BREATH!

Three reincarnations for a once nondescript home

By Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Bobot Meru

TIME does have a way of changing people's perspectives. Tessie Estagle had been so reluctant to move into their new home in 1969, yet she would choose to stay in the very same dwelling rather than move to a bigger one in upscale Ayala-Alabang several decades later.

Not only did the one-story, three-bedroom affair resemble a "box" back then, says the personality development consultant, she found the Las Piñas address too remote, if not too provincial for her cosmopolitan taste.

"BF Homes in Almanza?" she recalls asking her husband Joey, then an executive in a multinational oil company. "I didn't even know where on earth it was." Banco Filipino developed bigger, more upscale villages later, but BF Homes in Almanza holds the distinction of being first.

Tessie made no attempts to hide her disinterest. Unlike the typical first-time homeowner, she went to the site only once during the house's construction. Not even Joey's reassurance could convince her that their future home, for all its simplicity, would eventually grow on her. It didn't help that the hubby had tapped the company's in-house architect—a fellow known for designing, of all things, gasoline stations!

Gasoline station

"With its drab walls and jalousie windows, the house looked more like a gasoline station office," she says. The only things missing were gas pumps so she couldn't even brag about it to her friends, much less invite them over.

Tessie's disdain eventually faded when kids Carlo and then Miguel were born. Still, she didn't dare invite her *amigas* for weekend gatherings. That was until she met and eventually befriended architect Gerry Contreras, who has been instrumental in the transformations of the Estagles' nondescript middle-class dwelling. With his help, it has become a homey abode that mirrors Tessie's personality—her love for antiques, heirloom pieces and landscaped pocket gardens.

"I had a hidden agenda when I befriended Gerry," she says with a wink. "He had taken me to his house and several other projects before I mustered enough guts to ask him to come over and see for himself what he could do for mine."

That it took Gerry a mere 10 minutes to sketch his ideas impressed Joey and pushed Tessie all the more to begin the first phase of renovation. That was in 1979, soon after the Estagles bought a vacant lot adjacent to their original property.

"Renovation is really my forte," says the architect. "I rarely tear down entire structures to make way for new ones. I try as much as possible to work around existing elements with whatever enhancements or additions that will follow."

First time

Tessie confirms that Gerry has been able to seamlessly alter the look of her home on two separate occasions. "Unlike other houses which have undergone several renovations," she says, "mine doesn't look like a series of patch-up jobs. What's more, he was able to work within my budget."

Gerry first went to work by enhancing the perimeter wall. He increased the height, accented it with bricks to match the house's façade and built Spanish-style wrought-iron grills into it to allow air to circulate. He later had the vacant lot fenced off with the same elements, making the entire property look bigger and more imposing without appearing cold—thanks to the brick accent and Iberian-inspired grills.

The ubiquitous jalousies by the living room soon gave way to a pair of French windows that open to the front garden, a space that has also undergone several transformations in the deft hands of Carlo, the Estagles' first-born who shares his mother's passion for interesting living spaces. Another pair of French windows, opposite those in the *sala*, leads to a landscaped garden-cum-breakfast-nook with a planter sandwiched by a pair of artificial waterfalls.

Gerry's expertise also extends to practical areas. He designed and oversaw the construction of Tessie's new and bigger kitchen beside the outdoor breakfast nook that used to lie idle. "The dining room has been freed of the old kitchen and the new one has made cooking easier and a lot more fun," says the willing and able hostess, who now regularly holds lunches and dinners for friends.

Gerry's attempts to allow the outside in are evident in a number of touches. The concrete divider between the *sala* and the dining room had to go as well, allowing the Estagles an unimpeded view of both front and back gardens. He also helped Tessie group together several oil and watercolor paintings, and provided her with antique carvings that now accent the walls.

Second time

She has kept a number of heirloom pieces from her grandmother's Spanish-era Cavite house, which eventually went to seed. One of her favorites, an encased diploma now faded and brown with age, dates back to 1907. It belonged to her late grandfather who graduated with honors at the old Ateneo in Intramuros.

The duo was at it again in 1991, the year the house became an empty nest. Gerry converted one of the bedrooms, the middle one, into a family room. He knocked down the wall separating it from the living room. He then replaced the jalousies with a pair of French windows that led to the vacant lot, which Carlo turned into a Spanish colonial-inspired courtyard, complete with cobbled pathways and a central fountain. The two remaining bedrooms have also been refitted with French windows that open to the same garden.

The inside walls, too, have undergone a makeover. From cool beige, they have been painted a warm cinnamon because Gerry finds the brighter color complements Tessie's dark antique and furniture pieces better. Building a second floor never occurred to

THREE/ p.F4

CARLO'S lush English garden features a concrete statue of three nymphs and a circular path made of cobbled bricks.

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The PayLite Below 0% offer is initially available for the 6-month installment term at the SM Appliance Center-Citibank Installment Festival at SM City North Edsa (January 31 to February 10) and SM City Bacoor (February 13 to 24, 2002). Under the program, cardholders will get back 1% of their PayLite purchased amount, reflected on their card statements for the next 6 months. So not only do cardholders get to pay on installment at 0% interest, they even get a credit of 1% per month! And with the total 6% cash credit,Citibank cardholders pay lower than the cash price.

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And of course, 0% and reduced interest rate offers are still available with Citibank PayLite on the promotion dates. Hurry and visit SM City North Edsa and SM City Bacoor this February and enjoy heartwarming treats available only to Citibank cardholders. Now, you don't need to suffer because Citibank PayLite truly helps you make installment payments the longer, lighter way!

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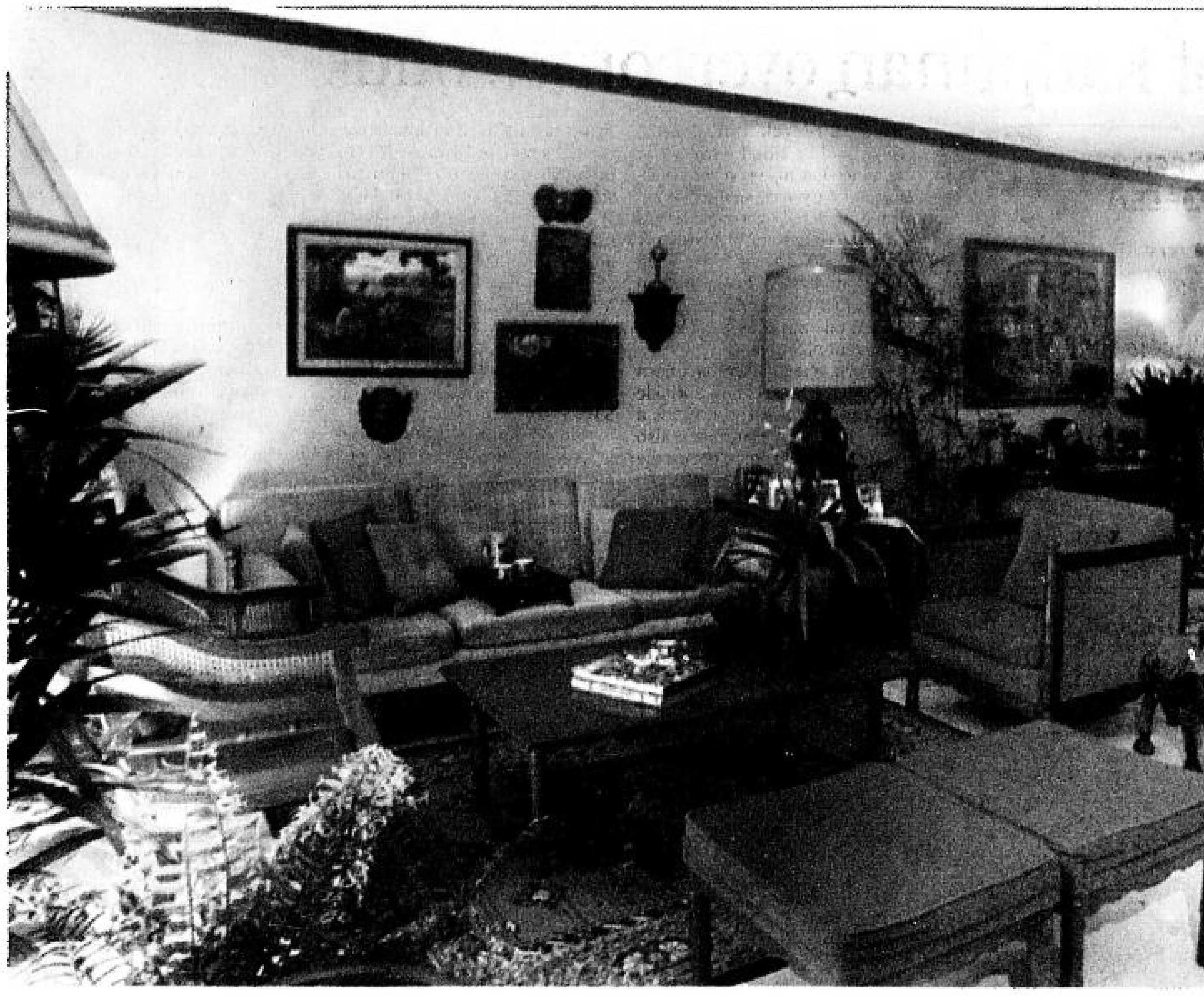


FIRST TRANSFORMATION. In 1979, Gerry Contreras had the concrete divider separating the sala from the dining room removed, allowing the Estagles an unimpeded view of both front and rear gardens. Eleven years later, the walls underwent a makeover from cool beige to warm cinnamon, which complements Tessie's dark antique and furniture pieces better.

FRENCH windows in the sala lead to front and rear gardens, a way to let the outside in. Potted plants spill inside, while oil and watercolor paintings are grouped together and accented with antique carvings.

Three reincarnations for a once nondescript home

Seamless alterations being architect Gerry Contreras' forte, he renovated this middle-class home not once, not twice, but thrice, and transformed it into the owners' pride and joy

From page F3

them even when the boys were growing up and needed more space. It would have robbed the house of its quaint charm, says Gerry.

Third time

The Estagles' home is undergoing its third reincarnation because the two young sons (Miguel is married) are beginning to visit more often, especially on weekends. The maids' quarters will be turned into a bedroom. A living area and laundry room for the maids will occupy a corner of the courtyard by the rear perimeter wall.

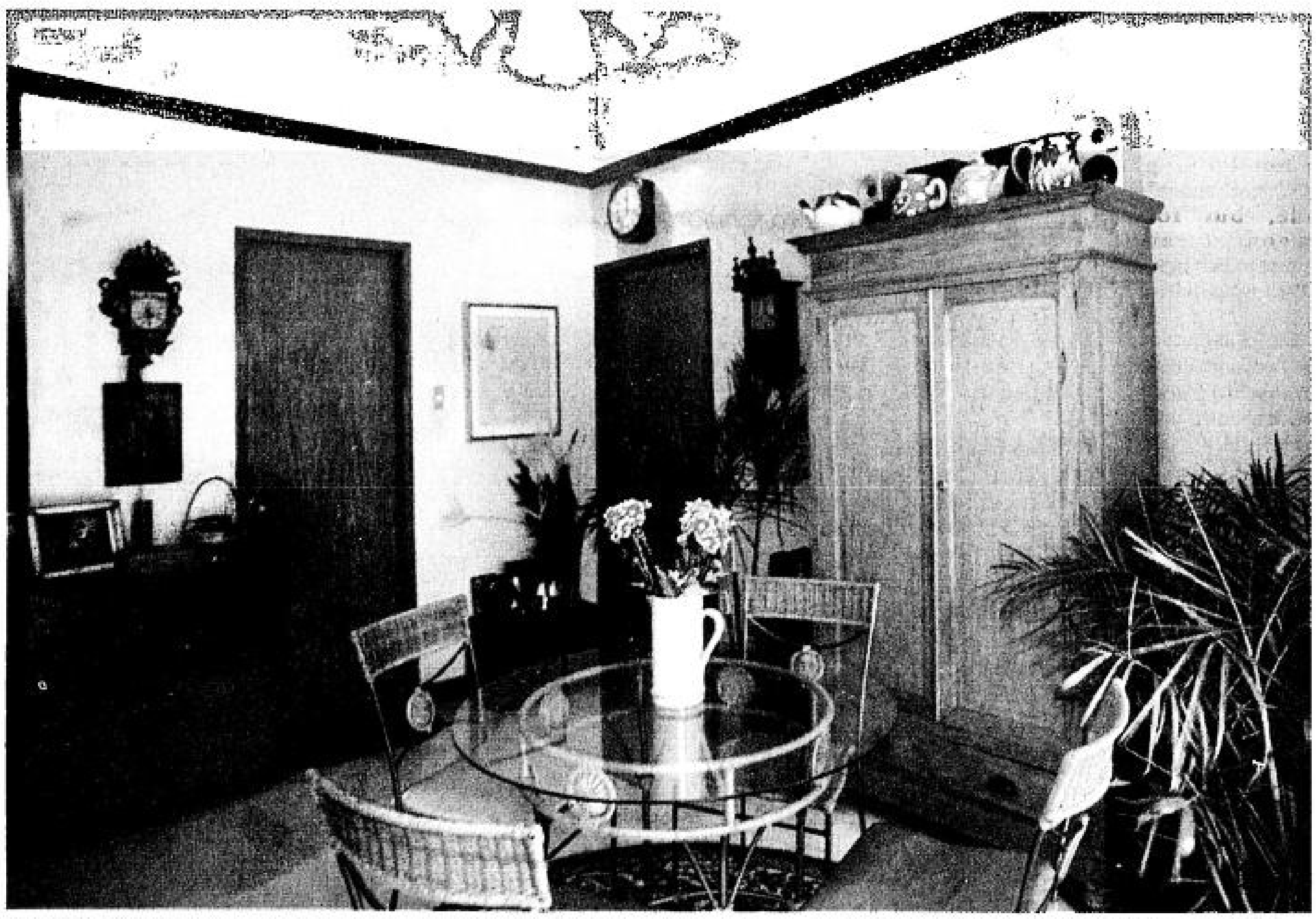
Tessie plans to have a series of wooden trellises built in the courtyard to set the mood for bigger outdoor parties in the future. The couple will celebrate their pearl wedding anniversary some time this year, and Tessie and Joey are busy practicing with the violin and classical guitar, respectively, in time for the big event.

"We've never played these instruments before," she shares. "Joey and I decided to give them a try now that we have extra time in our hands. Exploring new areas helps keep us young."

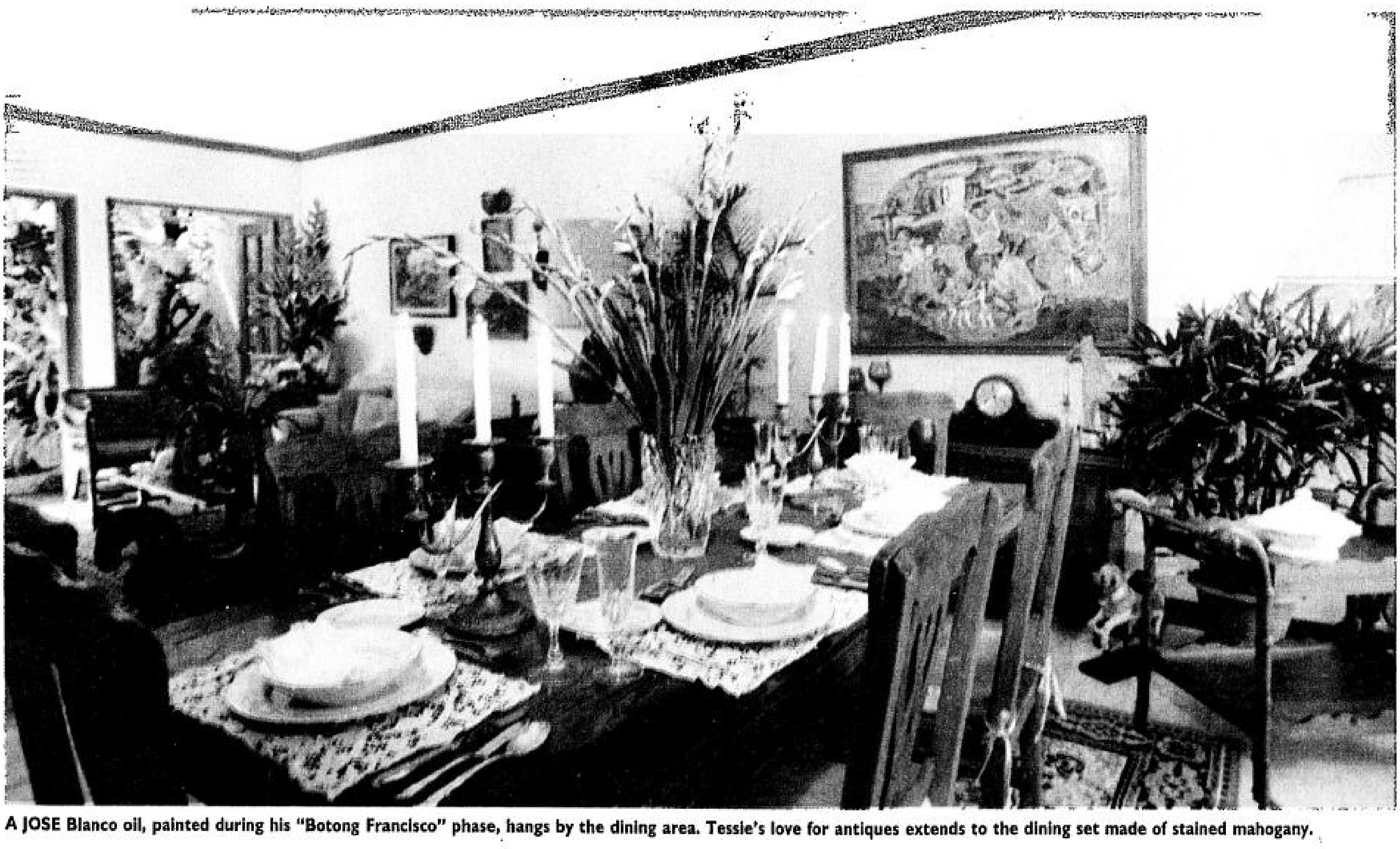
A few years ago, the Estagles had the option to move to Ayala-Alabang where the house Joey inherited from his parents stands. In the end, however, the family decided to stay in their Almanza home and rent out the bigger Ayala-Alabang house.

"This home grew with us," says Tessie. "It reflects the real me. I can't imagine living anywhere else."

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph



AN ANTIQUE *aparador* made of *narra* in the family room holds the sound system. Another heirloom piece, an antique *baul*, sits in a corner. The area opens to a Spanish colonial-style courtyard.



A JOSE Blanco oil, painted during his "Botong Francisco" phase, hangs by the dining area. Tessie's love for antiques extends to the dining set made of stained mahogany.

Greening of Katipunan overcomes odds

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaskell Nuyda

ANNIE S. Cruz, active participant and a leading light of the Greening of Katipunan Project in Diliman, QC, has been sending me feedback since this column's initial report on her group's activities in November and December last year.

The greening, cleaning and beautifying continue, she says. While more people are getting involved, there still are a few hitches here and there but nothing that time and unabated effort cannot remedy. That's how optimistic Annie is. We quote excerpts from her latest report dated Jan. 16:

"The neem trees and bougainvilleas are growing fast. Some of the bougainvilleas have shown their attractive colors. We still experience occasional cases of vandalism, when whole plants already in bloom are uprooted, or leaves left torn and wilted, and we tend to think it is the work of 'addicts' who come out at night when lights are dim or when there are no lights at all. Some children still play at the pedestrian overpass, especially during late afternoons and evenings, endangering themselves and passersby."

The guardrail along the center island across Miriam's elementary department looks like it was hit by a 10-wheeler. Damage to young trees and plants means extra work for the MMDA workers.

Promise kept

On the bright side, the Sucat Thermal Plant in Parañaque has honored its pledge to have dump trucks bring soil. This is now being readied as planting medium on the islands across De la Strada church and part of the road going to the University of the Philippines. The thermal plant also donated 12 recycled oil drums, which will be filled with water and placed at the service road islands for easy accessibility as suggested by MMDA gardeners. This will assure constant water supply for the plants. The sign "Greening of Katipunan" will be painted on the drums. The drums are being welded on stands by the MMDA to prevent pilferage.

Leaks in water tankers have been fixed. So the tankers now sprinkle the plants two or three times a week. Tanker operators are also more careful now not to drown the plants by overwatering them.

MMDA's watering schedule has been changed from 6 a.m.-2 p.m. to 5 a.m.-1 p.m. to take advantage of the cooler hours.

To further assure continuous water supply (should the tankers fail to arrive for some reason), the following schools and establishments have offered to donate water on specified times: Metro Bank, Kostka School, Shell gas station and Xanland Plaza, daily; World Prep Nursery School, three times a week. Other companies are being tapped.

MMDA gardeners report on Mondays and alternate their days off during the week to assure also that the plants are cared for and maintained daily. Some of them are fielded during Saturdays and Sundays.

Annie's group is trying to find ways to discourage vendors from plying their trade on the service road islands. Aside from being illegal, their activities hamper traffic and create an eyesore. The Katipunan Greening group is considering referring the matter to the Loyola Heights barangay chair.

Another matter that needs to be threshed out as well is the lighting of the overpass, especially in the area fronting Miriam College, to prevent vandalism and pilferage. As a preliminary measure, a streamer with the words like—"These plants belong to the community, let us all respect and take care of them"—will soon be put up by students from Miriam's Junior Environmental Club.

The greening of Katipunan is becoming more and more like a microcosm of environmental projects everywhere. The job seems gigantic, but with everyone chipping in, work goes faster and success seems more certain. For this reason, we take our hats (or hair bands) off to Katipunan's greening committee. May its tribe increase, and may we all profit by its example.

Annie says she will keep us abreast of the Katipunan project's progress. We'll report on it as it comes.

The job seems gigantic, but with everyone chipping in, work goes faster and success seems more certain

US-based doctor wants to marry a *kabayan*

LIVE AND LET LIVE

Tita Dulce

DEAR Tita Dulce,

I am a single male Filipino physician in my 30s, working in the United States and hoping to marry a Filipina. I've dated non-Filipinas, but every time I go home for a vacation it becomes clearer to me that I will only be completely happy if I marry someone who knows my culture.

I am financially stable, with a six-figure annual salary and, I believe, also emotionally stable to start a family. I want to meet someone who is smart, personable, with some degree of sophistication that I can relate to at the same level. I am not looking for a "mail order" bride, but for someone I can share my life with, grow old with, physically and spiritually.

I go home for two weeks each year to be with my family but it is too short a time to meet women and get to know them well. I will appreciate it if you could give me some suggestions on how I can use my time more efficiently and systematically for this purpose. I go home annually and I want to make the most of the short visit to be with my family and meet women at the same time. Thank you for your attention.

MARTIN

Are you familiar with the song that runs: "The dearest things in life are around you everywhere, right outside your door, why keep reaching for the moon?" There are many Filipinas in the United States—nurses, students and other professionals. You just might meet someone special if you attend socials organized by Pinoys there. Make use of your time since you are there 50 weeks of each year.

As to how you can meet them here, go to hospitals so you can meet the staff, attend church gatherings, get in touch with civic clubs, see the dean of the College of Medicine where you studied. He/she might invite you to a party.

Beyond the medical profession, there are many attractive Filipinas here. Don't just stay home with your family. Ask your parish priest or pastor if there is a group you can join while you are here. And why not stay here for at least three weeks?

Dear Readers,

This doctor did not give his address in the United States, or his family's address here. His e-mail is mrod34@netscape.net.

* * *

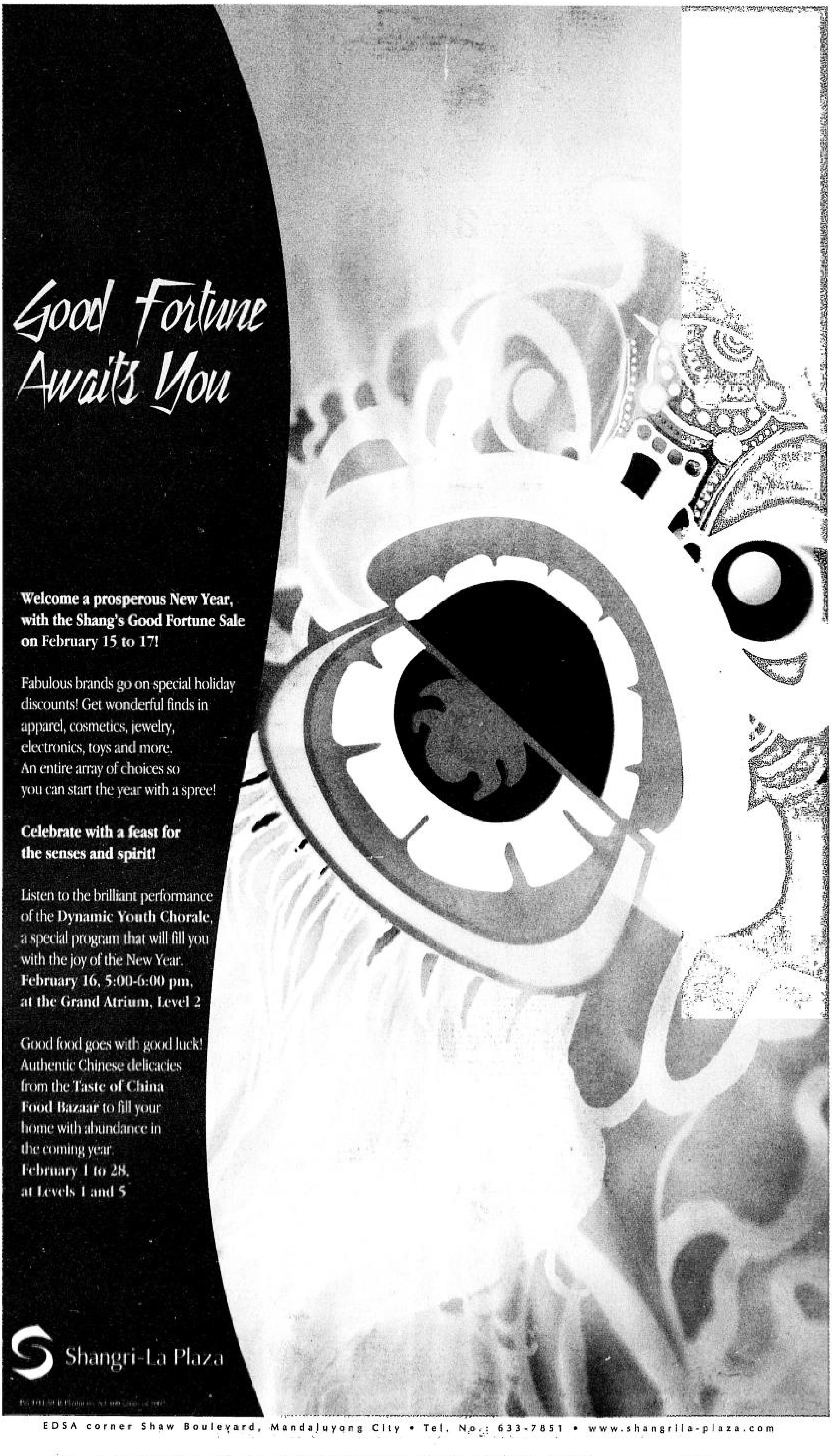
Erratum: The concert by the disabled and senior citizens will be held on Feb. 24 at the Equitable-PCIBank Tower 1, Makati Avenue corner De la Costa Street, Makati City. Admission is free.

* * *

THANK you for your response to my query regarding the requirements for adopting a child. Please furnish me the exact address of the DSWD. I will be starting from scratch. Thank you.

PABLITO RUIZO
P.O. Box 21660
Riyadh 11485
Saudi Arabia

The address of the Department of Social Welfare and Development is Batasan Complex, Constitutional Hall, Quezon City, Philippines. The tel. no.: (02) 931-8101 to 07. Don't forget, you will also need the services of a lawyer. Since you gave your address, you just might receive letters informing you about some children ready for adoption.



Welcome a prosperous New Year, with the Shang's Good Fortune Sale on February 15 to 17!

Fabulous brands go on special holiday discounts! Get wonderful finds in apparel, cosmetics, jewelry, electronics, toys and more. An entire array of choices so you can start the year with a spree!

Celebrate with a feast for the senses and spirit!

Listen to the brilliant performance of the **Dynamic Youth Chorale**, a special program that will fill you with the joy of the New Year. **February 16, 5:00-6:00 pm, at the Grand Atrium, Level 2**

Good food goes with good luck! Authentic Chinese delicacies from the **Taste of China Food Bazaar** to fill your home with abundance in the coming year. **February 1 to 28, at Levels 1 and 5**

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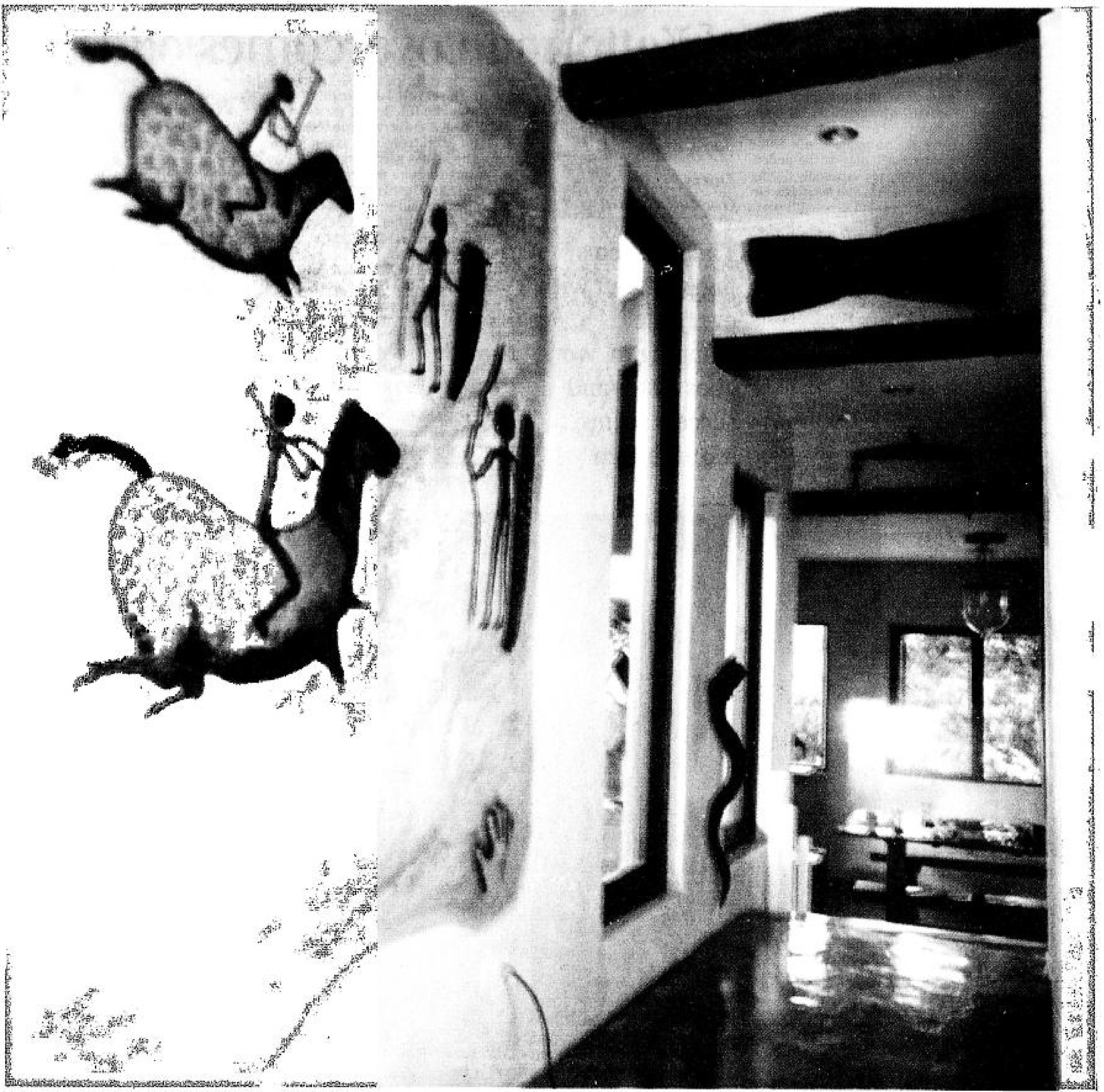


THE WALL mural announces the owner's passion. The cave art of polo, the sports of kings, is a humorous irony. When did cavemen become gentlemen? This hallway leads to the informal dining room.

A weekend home in Calatagan reveals its owner's penchant for color and tasteful overload

Col r his world

By Marge C. Enriquez
Photos by Wahoo Guerrero

HIGH-SATURATION color is the decorating lexicon of the present and the future.

The owner (who requested anonymity) of this weekend home on a hilltop in Calatagan, Batangas instinctively followed this precept during the construction. He favors bright colors not only because they reflect the warmth and vibrancy of the tropics, but they also bring happiness into his dwelling.

From a distance, the fruity hues of the exterior, crowned by a glistening copper, come across as a visual shock. However, the energetic palette and the panorama that encompass the glistening Pagaspas Bay and the lush vegetation of Batangas and Mindoro energize anyone who leaves the place.

The house is bold in ethnic usage, ranging from the owner's collection of objects from different cultures to the raw quality of the colors and African-inspired wall murals.

The interiors are coated in various shades of yellow. As a background, it pulls all the other colors together into a lively bohemian whole.

The owner explains that he wants it to be a fun house, much like an Indiana Jones adventure.

Outdoors, mango with raspberry creates a fiery look that reflects the tropical environment. Indoors, yellow with earthy orange and brown produces a country-style atmosphere. In the living and dining area, yellow evokes the effusive warmth of sunshine. Even the burnt orange walls in the guest bedroom blazes with visual heat, reminiscent of terra cotta.

Multithemed

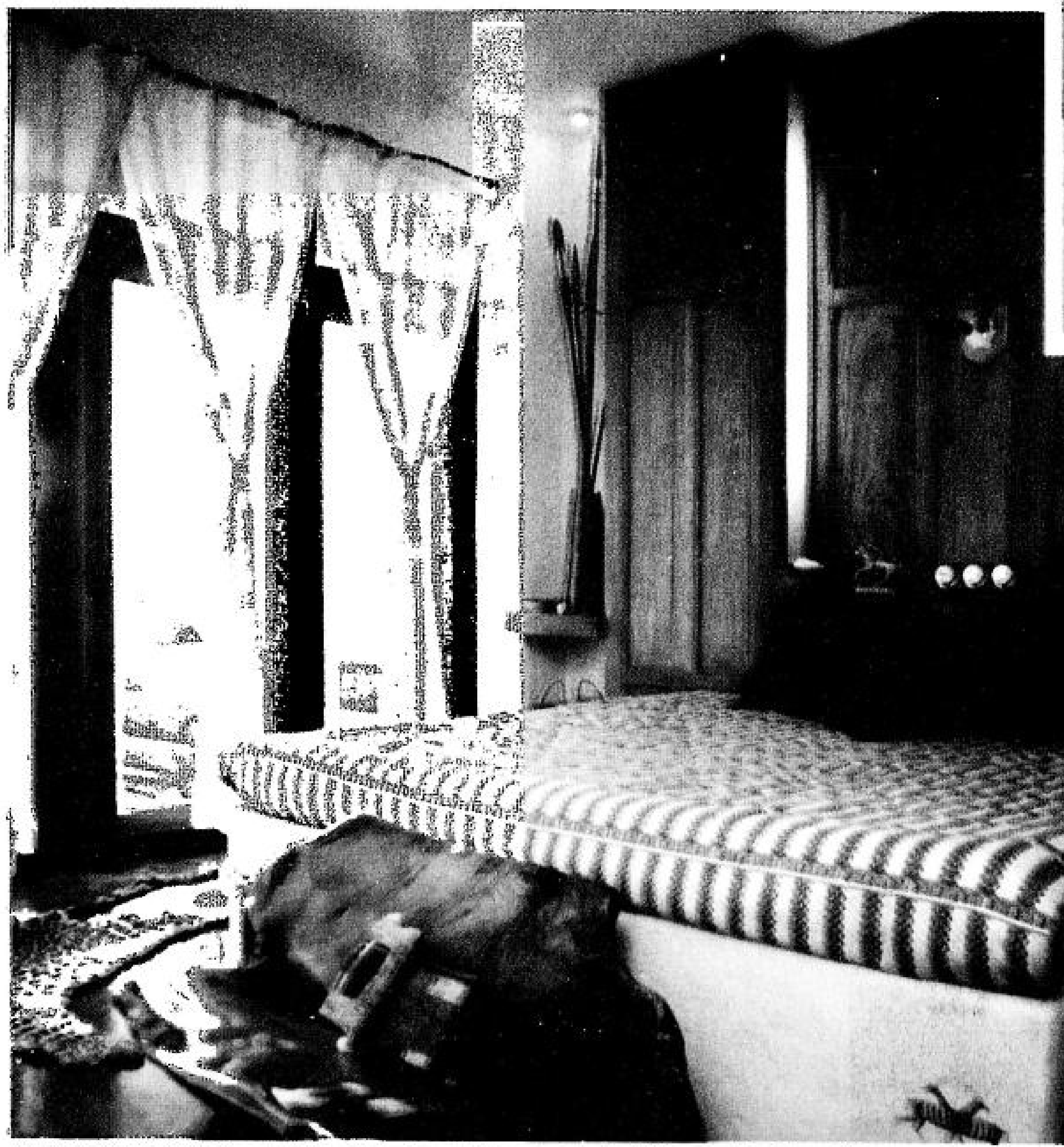
Set designer Dan Fernandez painted the walls in various themes. The mural of polo players that look like Stone Age cave paintings divulges the owner's passion. Another mural shows a restful scene of kudus in the forest. In his daughter's bedroom, her name forms part of the geometric patterns, typical of ethnic art. A mural, inspired by American Indian art, in the master bathroom, gives the feeling of watching a wall of warmth.

Against the rich, warm yellows, the ethnic objects come alive, thus evoking an ambience of warmth and sensuality. Any decorator who sees the place can't help but comment the home is definitely a man's world. It is, after all, meant to showcase the unusual objects the owner has accumulated over the years.

There are references to the resident's sport

COLOR/ p.F7

GUESTROOM is a variation of the recurring theme of the hunter with an artwork of a fossilized barracuda displayed over headboard, recycled from antique door. Orange emphasizes the bold background planes.

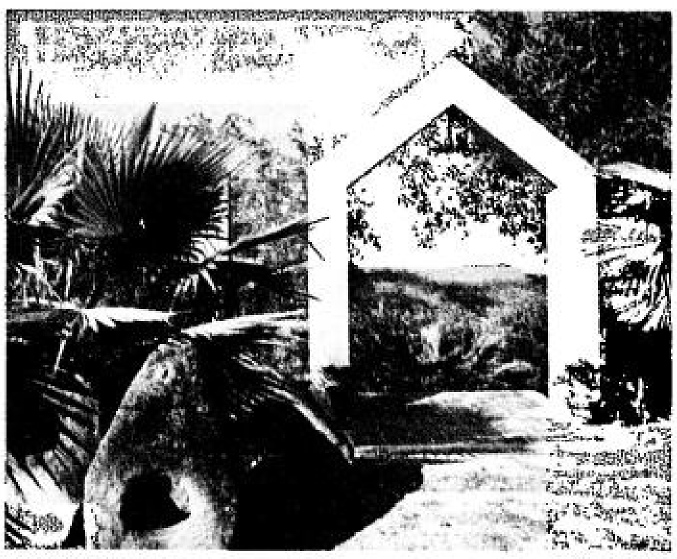


MASTER BEDROOM. The cement bed base is stenciled and painted with horses. A whole wall becomes a headboard, made from parts of an old house. Simple slabs of wood become an alcove for the owner's appointments such as spears. The wrought-iron curtain rod is curved to resemble a tree branch to complement the ethnic setting. The place is littered with unique finds such as animal skins and a tree root bench.

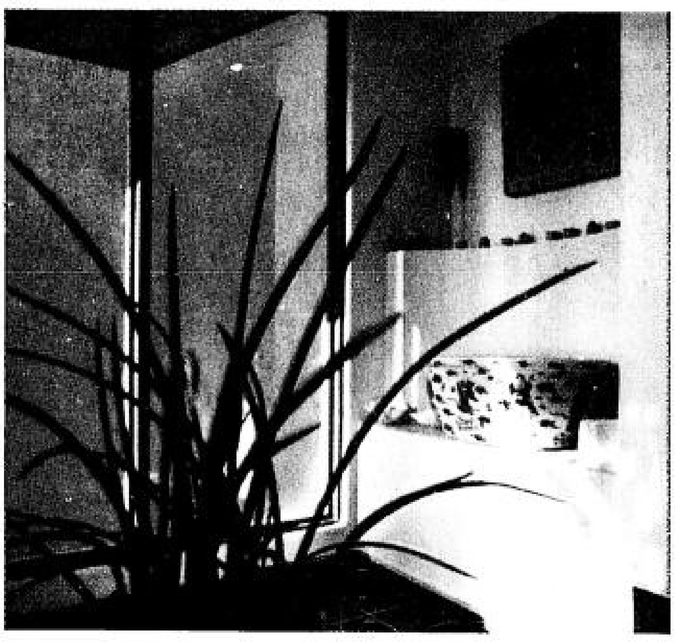
VIEW of Pagaspas Bay from the hilltop inspired the owner to buy this property. Of interest is a replica of an African fertility icon, made in Pampanga, on the deck.

INVENTIVE use of common materials creates a visual interest. The lowly *araal* stone and concrete become classy because of the clever use of banana yellow on the risers. Displayed on a stone pedestal, the steel floater looks like a modern artwork.

Col r his world



SCULPTURAL AND ELEMENTAL. The artsy pointed archway contrasts the teardrop-shaped *piedras china*.



MAXIMIZING SPACE. An alcove with layers of concrete to create ledges and a seat enliven this corner in the master bathroom.

From page F6

such as a miniature silver mallet from the Sultan of Brunei and a silver cup from the Sultan of Pahang, mallets, spurs, polo helmets, saddles, horse bits and Navajo saddle blankets. There are obvious macho symbols such as spears, an Australian boomerang, walking sticks, oars and deer horns and male representations of power such as antique cannons, metal balls from Mindanao that are used to kill animals or test muscle power.

The house owner also shows his penchant for *objets trouvé* and his knack for arranging them. The façade is embellished with wooden, carved windows from India. The sconces are Oriental backpacks that carry babies. Parts of a native tiller are converted into a three-seater. The entrance is made dramatic by narra doors from an old church.

Beauty in junk

The owner finds beauty in junk. He arranged old motor blades on a *traviesa* as a conversation piece. Once he spotted an old fretwork in a shanty and bought it at a cheap price. The carvings became the inspiration for the design of the kitchen cabinets.

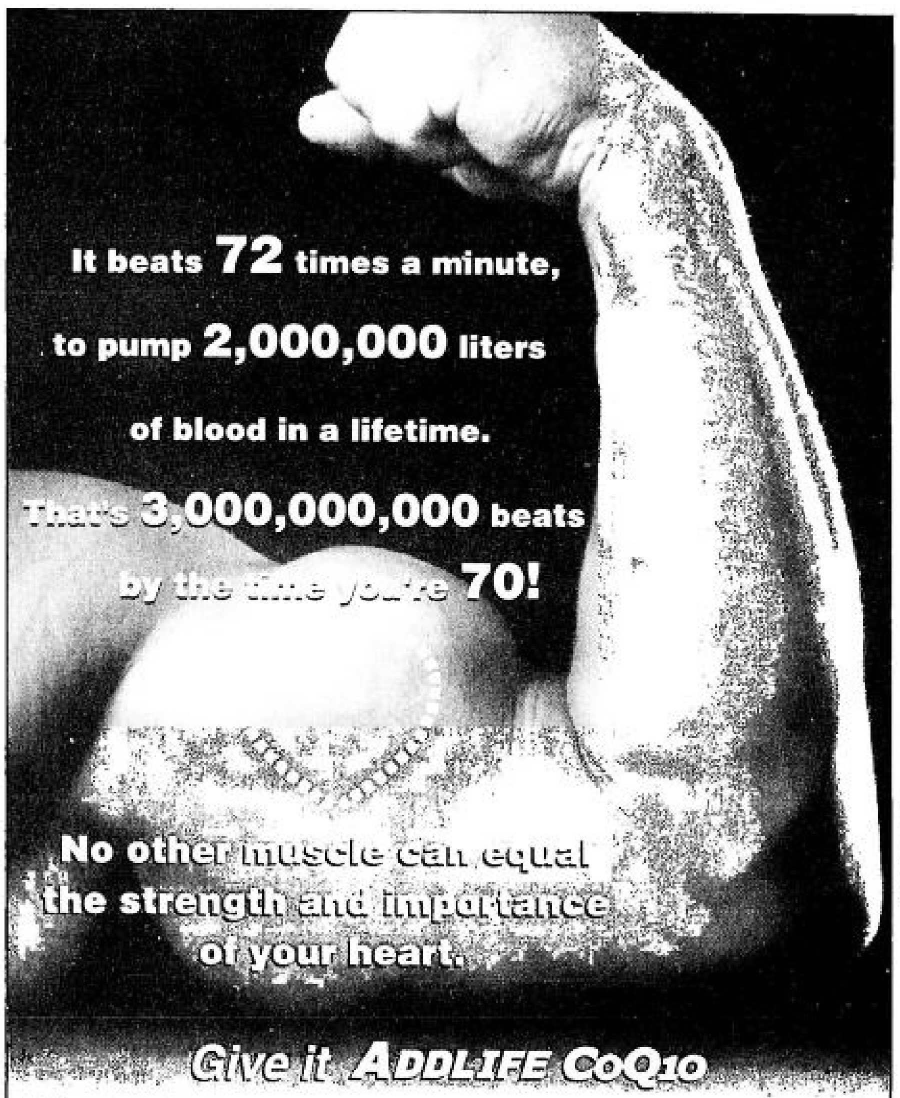
He also likes to keep artifacts such as a century-old Indian urn, an Ifugao rice container, Maranao gongs and metal masks from Mindanao which he painted on.

There's a fertility goddess on top of the main bed. Its purpose is purely decorative.

Although the house is an eyeful, there are architectural elements common in elite homes. The house has several levels as it built on a hilltop. Glass windows frame the view of the vista. A beam in the ceiling is painted with wild animals. *Traviesas* or antique railroad tracks are used as steps and house beams to lend character. The master bathroom is reminiscent of the Thai villas in resorts. The shower stall is partly enclosed by glass to give the feeling of bathing al fresco. However, high walls outside the house shield the shower stall.

The wife says her only contribution to the construction of the house was in the arrangement of the stones in the terrace and a big kitchen and dining area. The kitchen is fully stocked so that hubby won't miss anything in Manila.

ART extends all the way to the master bathroom. The owner creates an alcove to show more pieces plus a geometric wall painting that looks like wall tapestry. Yellow and blue is a macho combination. The blue tiles in the bathroom connote water and freshness.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Although heart diseases are due to a variety of causes-from dietary habits to lifestyle, scientists discovered the presence of increasing symptoms associated with Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) to be correlated with the severity of *CoQ10* deficiency. Other diseases associated with *CoQ10* deficiency are Artherosclerosis/ Ischemic Heart disease, Toxin-induced Cardiomyopathy, Hypertension Arrythmias, Muscular Dystrophy, Cancer (breast, lung, prostate, pancreatic and colon) and even periodontal disease (inflamed gingiva).

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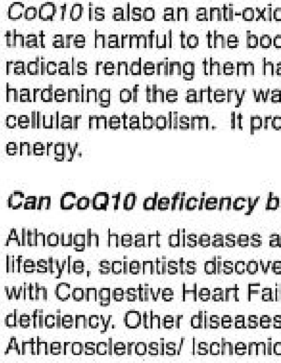

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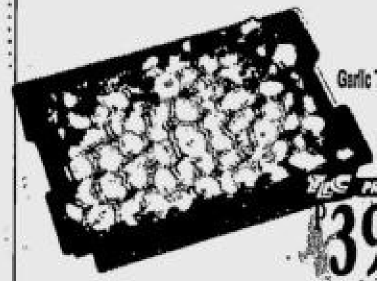
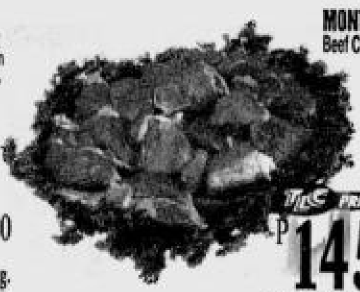
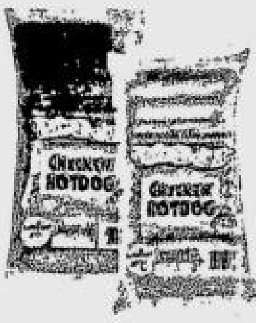

Garlic Taiwan
TLC PRICE
P39.00/kg.

AFI
Salmon Steak
*Not available in SuperSale Club, Sta. Mesa & North EDSA
TLC PRICE
P285.00/kg.
Reg. Price 295.00


MONTEREY
Beef Cubes
TLC PRICE
P145.00/kg.
Reg. Price 165.00


PURE DELIGHT
Chicken Hotdog
- Regular Clear
- Regular Red

1 kg.
TLC PRICE
P87.00/ea.
Reg. Price 99.00

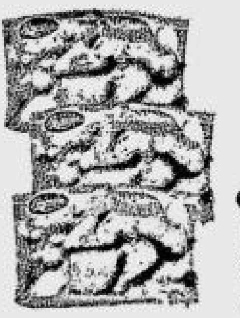
CAMPO CARNE
Moby Hotdog
- Regular

1 kg
TLC PRICE
P115.00/ea.
Reg. Price 121.75

PUREFOODS
Honeycured Bacon Sliced
200 g.
TLC PRICE
P58.00/ea.
Reg. Price 64.75

MAGNOLIA
Chicken
- Breast Fillet

500 g.
TLC PRICE
P90.00/ea.
Reg. Price 97.00


MAGNOLIA
Chicken
- BBQ
- Garlic

600 g.
TLC PRICE
P70.00/ea.
Reg. Price 75.00

TANG
Powdered Juice Drink
- Orange

Refill
1.5 kg.
TLC PRICE
P105.00/ea.

DRYSDALE
Mango Nectar
1.5 Liters
TLC PRICE
P83.50/ea.
Reg. Price 92.50

LESLIE
Clover Chips
- Cheese

90 g.
TLC PRICE
P13.75/ea.
Reg. Price 15.50

COMBOS
Crackers
- Cheddar Cheese

241 g.
TLC PRICE
P114.00/ea.
Reg. Price 126.50

LADY'S CHOICE
Mayonnaise
220 mL.
2's
TLC PRICE
P77.00/pk.

LUDY'S
Peanut Butter
- Sweet & Creamy

490 g.
TLC PRICE
P54.00/ea.
Reg. Price 60.75

SEASONS
Fruit Mix
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TLC PRICE
P97.00/ea.
Reg. Price 99.00

NESTLE
Premium Chocolate Milk
1 Liter
TLC PRICE
P59.25/ea.
Reg. Price 63.00

JUMBO
Broth Cubes
- Beef
- Chicken
- Shrimp

60 g.
TLC PRICE
P17.50
Reg. Price 17.75

CAMPO CARNE
Ready to Eat In Can
- Sisig

150 g.
TLC PRICE
P21.75/ea.
Reg. Price 22.50

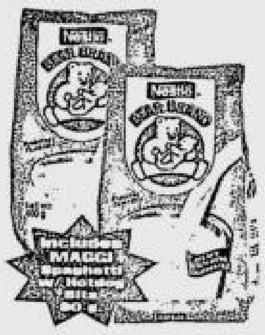
SABA
Squid In Soy Sauce
- Regular
- With Chili

155 g.
TLC PRICE
P10.75/ea.
Reg. Price 11.60

MAYA
Hotcake Mix
500 g.
TLC PRICE
P33.00/ea.
Reg. Price 35.00

QUEEN
Corn Starch
200 g
TLC PRICE
P9.50/ea.
Reg. Price 9.75

MILO
Tonic Food Drink
Refill
600 g.
TLC PRICE
P71.00/ea.

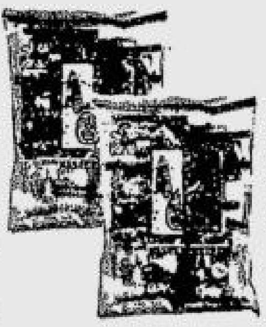

BEAR BRAND
Powdered Filled Milk
Refill
400 g.
TLC PRICE
P62.25/pk.

PEDIASURE
Nutritional Powder Milk
- Vanilla

900 g
TLC PRICE
P570.75/ea.
Reg. Price 588.50

WHAMMO'S
Cupcake
- Cheese Yema Filling
- Choco Filling
- Ube Pandan Filling

10's
TLC PRICE
P41.00/pk.
Reg. Price 44.00


HOT KID
Master Maipen
- Rice Crackers

72 g.
TLC PRICE
P29.75/pk.
Reg. Price 35.75

BLUSKIES
Crackers
- Sesame
- Spring Onion

25 g./10's
TLC PRICE
P17.00/pk.
Reg. Price 18.50

TANGO
Chocolate Bar
- Almond Nut
- Fruit & Nut

200 g
TLC PRICE
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Reg. Price 68.50

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Crystal Clear Candy
- Mint
- Fruit

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- Dry

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P63.50/ea.
Reg. Price 70.75

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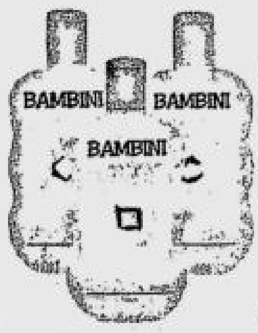
P24.75/ea.
Reg. Price 27.75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Baby Cologne
- Giggles
- Blush
- Innocence
- Sixteen

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TLC PRICE
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Reg. Price 43.75

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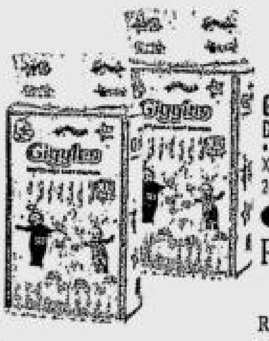
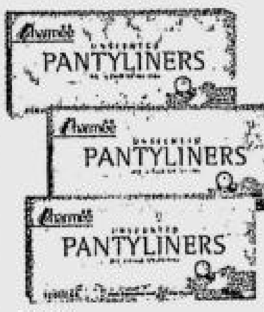
Facial Cleansing Soap
- Vitalizing
- Stimulating
- Sun Flower
- Refreshing

125 g.
TLC PRICE
P22.75/ea.
Reg. Price 27.75

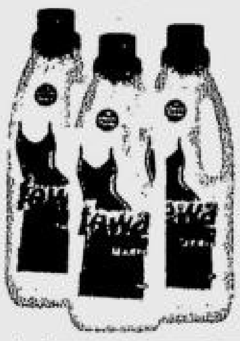
JOY
Bathroom Tissue
2 Ply
12's
TLC PRICE
P135.75/pk.
Reg. Price 142.75


GIGGLES
Disposable Diapers
- Teletubbies Design

XL
24's
TLC PRICE
P185.50/pk.
Reg. Price 209.50

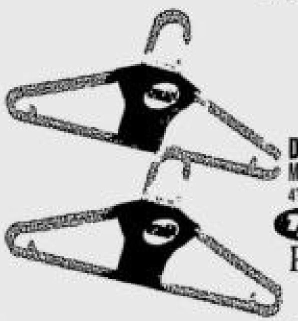

CHARMEE
Pantyliners
- Unscented

10's
TLC PRICE
P13.00/pk.
Reg. Price 15.75


FEWA
Black Magic Liquid Detergent
760 mL.
TLC PRICE
P89.50/ea.
Reg. Price 109.50

COUNTRY AIR
Scented Candle
- On Selected Variants

TLC PRICE
P90.00/ea.
Reg. Price 99.75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4's
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Reg. Price 24.75

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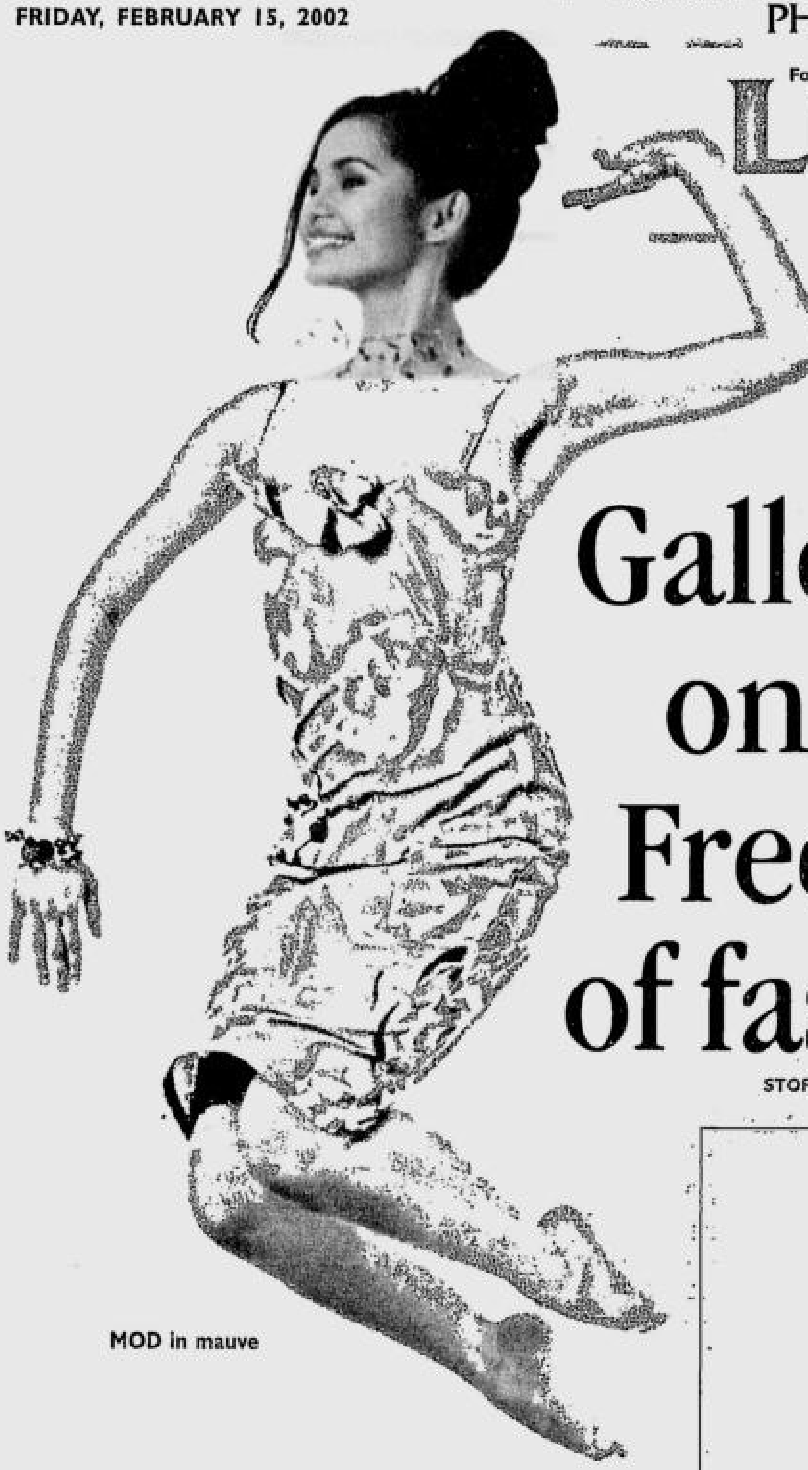
LIFESTYLE

Trend Spotting



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Galloping on the Freeway of fashion

STORY ON PAGE G2

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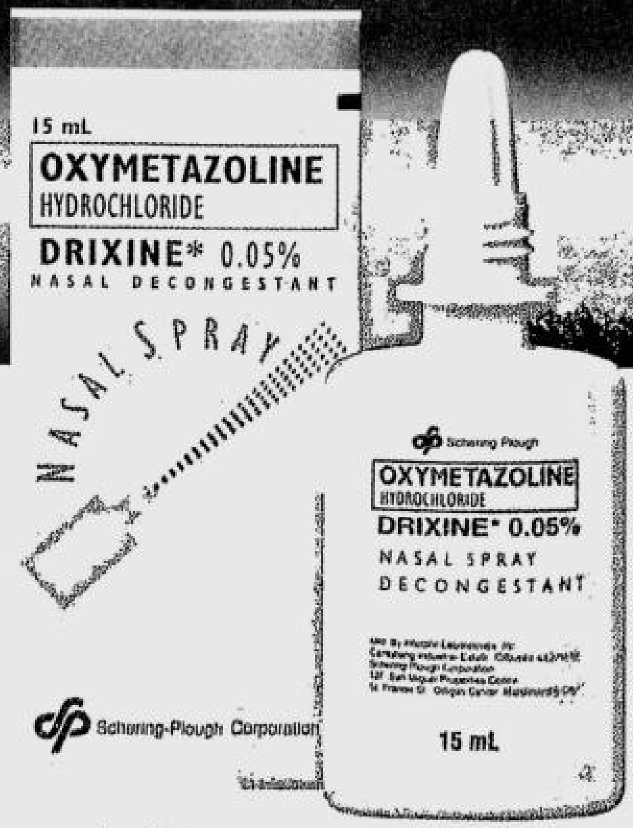

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Galloping on the Freeway of fashion

CHAIN-MAIL top and white mini

SHEREE Gotuaco, 32, says in the Year of the Horse, Freeway will imbibe the animal's agility and ability to jump over obstacles.

CITRUS colors glorify nature.

MODEL: KATHERINE SANCHEZ
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY BABETTE FOR TINETTE & CO.
MAKEUP: MARY KAY

By Marge C. Enriquez
Photos by Patrick Uy

IN THE YEAR of the Horse, Chinese-Filipino Sheree Gotuaco says Elite Garments will be galloping. Prospects this year include maintaining the volume of export and increasing domestic sales with the major launch of Freeway and possible franchises.

Freeway is the youngest but fastest-growing in the brand portfolio of Elite Garments. Although it has been around since 1997, the company is now going into marketing. It will hold a Kikay Fair starting at 2 p.m. on Feb. 23 at the Glorietta 4 park Ayala Center.

The activities cater to its young clientele—free henna tattoos, makeovers, nail painting and party with the all-male band Skin and the chart-topping Barbie's Cradle.

Sexy and trendy

In the mid-'90s, retailers saw the emergence of the teen market. Sheree launched the first Freeway store at Robinsons Galleria as it was near Poveda. Today, it is the fastest-growing brand among Elite's portfolio.

"The Filipino population is generally young. Since most teeners get an allowance, they will still spend even in hard times. Mothers tend to use the money more for the home and for their family rather than on themselves," says the 32-year-old vice president of Elite Garments.

Freeway distinguishes itself among the ingenue brands for subtly sexy clothes.

"The interesting thing is that Freeway doesn't sell as well if it is loose, boxy or blousy," she says. "We've learned through time how to interpret trends. Caucasians can get away with blousy tops because they have bigger proportions. It doesn't end up as flattering with the small frames of the Pinays."

Predictably, Freeway's bestsellers are the denims that come in stonewashed and distressed treatments, and tops that are spaghetti-strapped, printed or loud.

This summer, the stores will feature lots of stripes and the bohemian-gypsy looks.

Mix and match

After studying at the University of Southern California and the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, majoring in fashion design, Sheree got involved with the company.

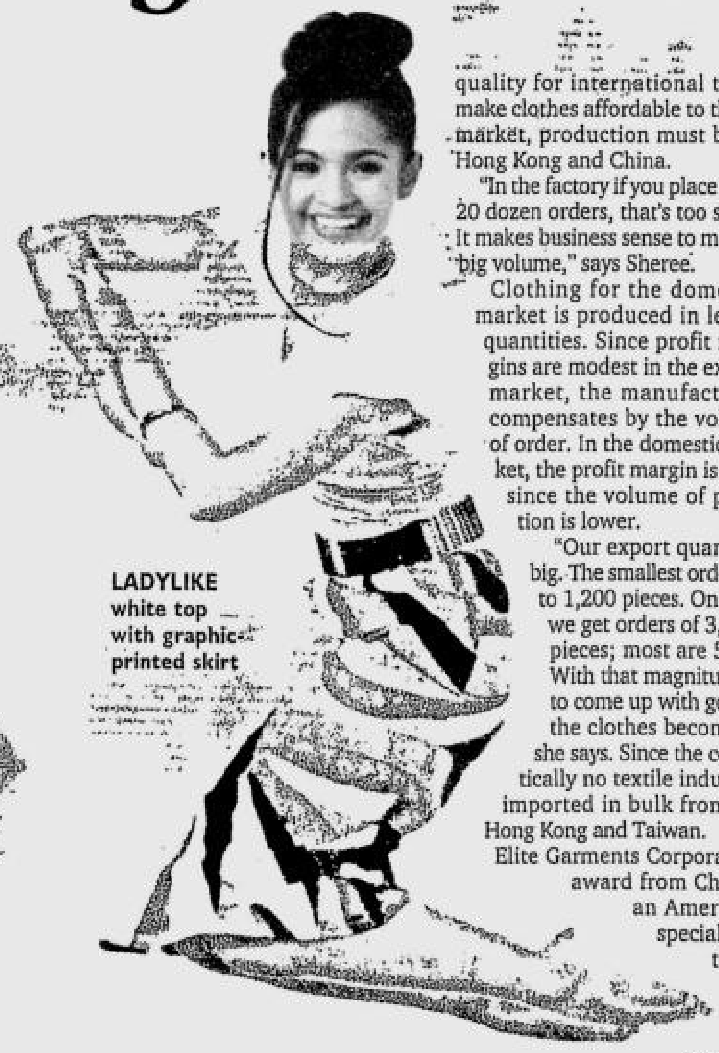
"I like fashion and business. Ten years ago, when I looked around the stores, there was a lack of mix-and-match here," she says.

Sheree's mother, Betty Roxas-Chua, started 22 B.C., which had aimed to present designer labels through ready-to-wear. She collaborated with Christian Espiritu, Cesar Gaupo, Sammy Tiongson, Rei Bancil, Loretto and Marden Iglesias. It began in the late '80s, when ready-to-wear was on the upswing.

On her own, Sheree established Ensembles, which was a younger, sportier version of separates.

The brand capitalized on this concept. Previously, the Filipino consumer favored matching tops and bottoms, dresses or two-piece suits. The mix-and-match concept encouraged the customer to buy separates that would not only complement other pieces in the wardrobe but were also creaseless.

AIRY lilac fairy



LADYLIKE white top with graphic-printed skirt

"You either bought dresses or a set if you were a career woman, you got a two- or three-piece suit as a whole. We tried to be different," she says.

The concept worked because the designs were strong in color and fabric. Sheree continued to be different with Freeway. The clothes are more daring—like 12-inch skirts and chain-mail backless tops—compared with the other ingenue brands.

Export market

However, the bulk of the business is in the export market. It's an irony that manufacturers are efficient in producing clothes of high quality for international trade. But to make clothes affordable to the domestic market, production must be done in Hong Kong and China.

"In the factory if you place five to 20 dozen orders, that's too small. It makes business sense to make a big volume," says Sheree.

Clothing for the domestic market is produced in lesser quantities. Since profit margins are modest in the export market, the manufacturer compensates by the volume of order. In the domestic market, the profit margin is bigger since the volume of production is lower.

"Our export quantities are big. The smallest order amounts to 1,200 pieces. On the average we get orders of 3,000 to 8,000 pieces; most are 50,000 pieces. With that magnitude we are able to come up with good quality and the clothes become affordable," she says. Since the country has practically no textile industry, fabrics are imported in bulk from Korea, China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Elite Garments Corporation received an award from Charming Shoppes, an American retailer that specializes in clothes for the plus figure. (Would you believe that the average American size is 16?) This chain has more than 1,500 stores in the US. Elite's volume in 2001 grew by 104 percent in units over 2000 figures.

The principals also appreciated the fact that Elite Garments gave them added value in service. The company even suggested their own designs and made mock-ups.

Sheree's business savvy holds true for both the local and global client: "Quality is important, so is the price," she says.

Free tickets to "Kikay" are available at all Freeway outlets. Also call Eventscape at 561-0442.

CLASSIC black and white

PAGE DESIGN: MARLONE RUBIO

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Nail that down!

After false eyelashes and false breasts, here come false nails!

Photos by Roger Carpio

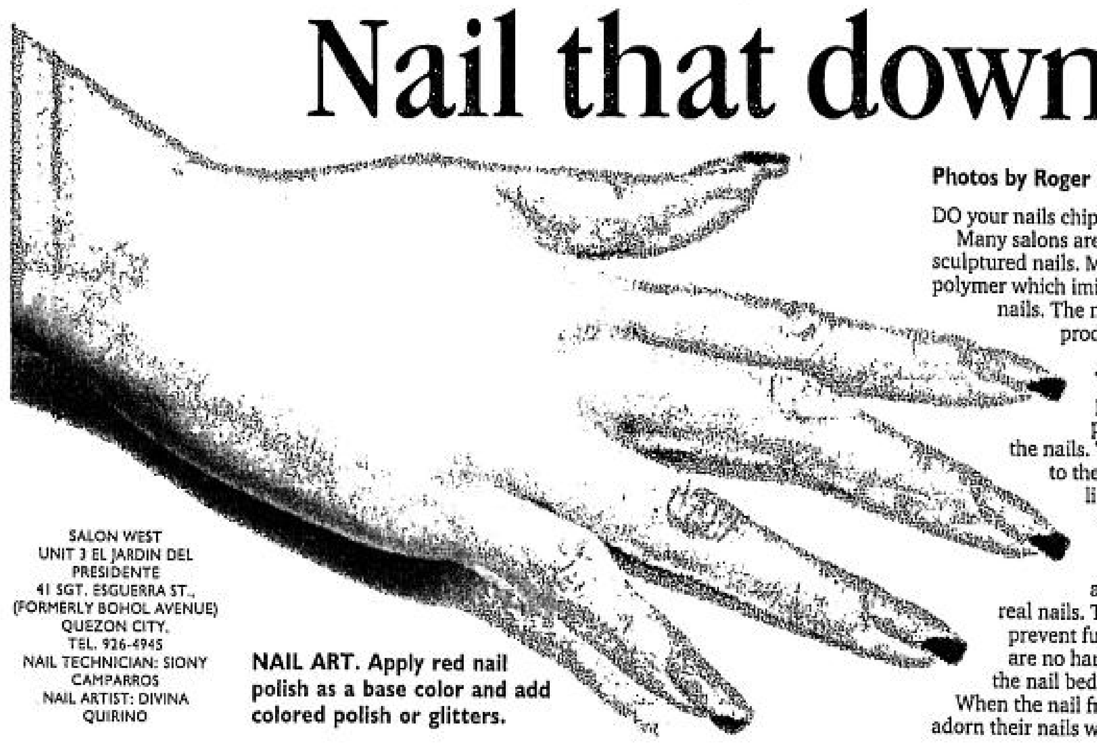
DO your nails chip easily?

Many salons are offering false nails, okay, sculptured nails. Most of them are made from polymer which imitate the structure of hard nails. The material is found in dental products.

Other salons use acrylic. The nail technician applies a primer to bond the nail powder and acrylic liquid to the nails. Then a nail frame is attached to the finger. The powder and the liquid hold the nail. The nail is filed and buffed and nail polish is applied.

Artificial nails are flexible as they imitate the structure of real nails. They are non-porous and prevent fungus and nail growth. There are no harmful chemicals to damage the nail bed.

When the nail frame is removed, women can adorn their nails with arty designs.



NAIL ART. Apply red nail polish as a base color and add colored polish or glitters.

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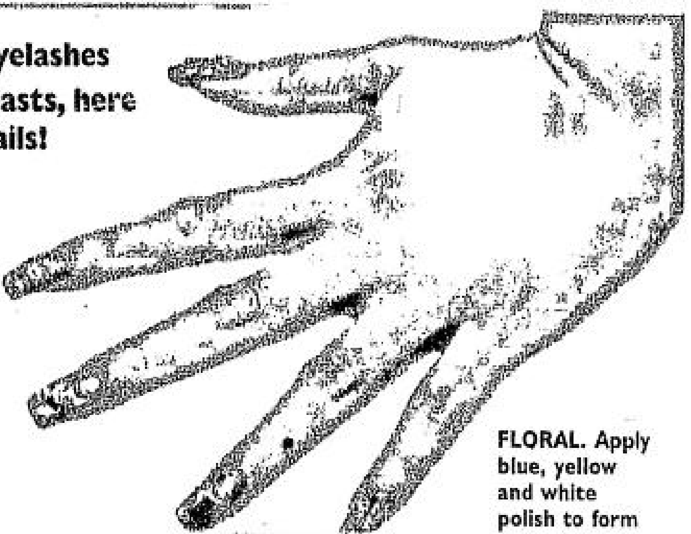


FLORAL. Apply blue, yellow and white polish to form dots to the base color. By using an orange stick, the artist will mix colors to form nail art.

THE FRAME that forms the sculptured nail.

Bazaar marks love month

GOINGS ON

CELEBRATE the love month with a shopping bazaar on Feb. 16 and 17 at the NBC Tent. Organized by Karl Edward Int'l., the two-day bazaar features high-quality but reasonably priced items such as home décor, export overruns, children's books and toys.

Check out the latest in sports wear and hobby equipment. There are export-quality garments like designer jeans, T-shirts for adults and children, home décor like candles, kitchen items, fashion accessories like bags and shoes, toys and children's books.

The monthly bazaar at the NBC Tent promises to be an exciting treat not just for mothers but for kids as well. Kids who accompany their parents at the bazaar can stay at the play center while mom and dad check out the latest bazaar items. "Shop@thefort" will be coming up with different themes for their monthly bazaars. The bazaar is open, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. "Shop@thefort" is held on the second weekend of every month. Free parking to all shoppers. "Shop@thefort" also accepts local and imported credit cards.

FAIR. Alabang Town Center, the premier shopping and entertainment mall south of Manila, continues with the celebration of festive February with a town fair.

On Feb. 16 and 17, ATC is bringing young love to the mall with its Valentine's Fair featuring activities for the young and young at heart such as Teen Fashion Show, food, game and school booths. A treat for visitors entitled "My Kiddie Valentine Show" will be held on Feb. 16, 11 a.m. at the Town Plaza and on Feb. 17, 4 p.m. at the Cinema Lobby.

Visitors can also request a love song or greet a friend at RX 93.1 booth located at the Town Plaza. There will be henna tattoing and face-painting for kids while clowns entertain mall visitors at the Town Plaza.

Popular band Pido with Take One will perform on Feb. 16, 7 p.m. at the Town Plaza.

FREE SEMINAR. A Marian Encounter seminar under the auspices of the Missionaries of Mary (MOM) will be held on Feb. 17, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., at the Catholic Charismatic Institute corner Scout Santiago and Scout Rallos, QC (behind Saint Paul the Apostle Church).

The seminar will cover the following topics: "Who is Mary? (Mary and the Trinity)" and "True Devotion to Mary (Imitation of Mary's Virtues)."

Fr. Louie Niez will be the Mass celebrant. Call the MOM secretariat at 743-8729.

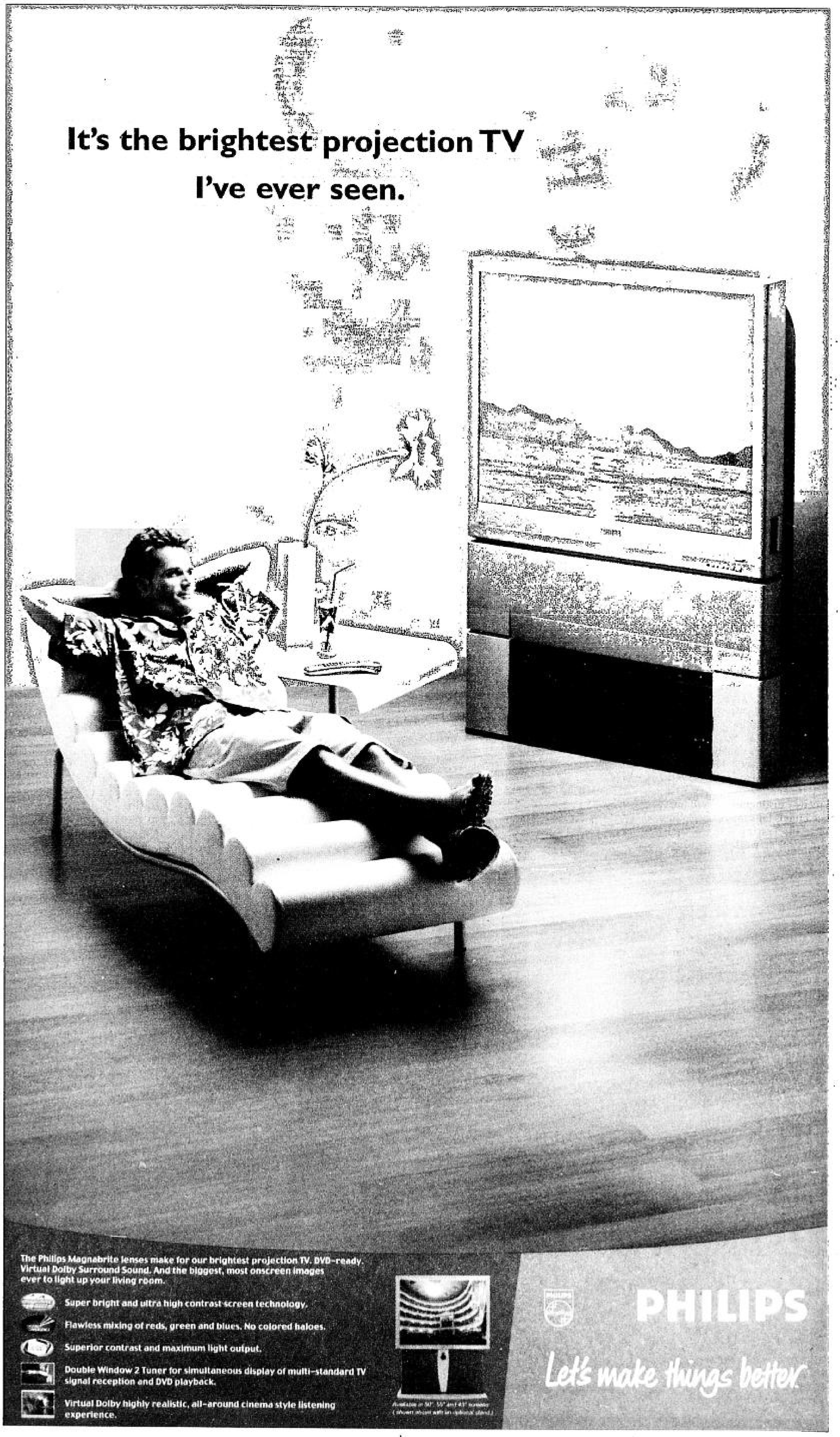
SALE. U2, the leading casual line for both men and women, gives the biggest discount up to 50-percent on selected items. Get a chance to pick from a wide variety of shirts, pants, skirts, polo, sweaters, bags, socks and belts. Cinderella exclusively distributes U2 in the Philippines. Visit U2 at SM North Edsa, Cinderella SM Megamall Building A, SM Centerpoint and Glorietta 3. The sale ends Feb. 17.

Meanwhile, 3M, makers of power brands such as Post-It Notes, Scotch-Brite and Scotchtint, will be mounting its Big Centennial Sale this month. Discounts start at a minimum of 20 percent for a wide range of 3M products. The 3M Centennial Sale will be on Feb.18, 19 and 20, 8 a.m.-5p.m. at the PCI Bank Tower 1, 6/F, and PCI Bank Tower 2, 10/F, Makati Avenue corner HV dela Costa Street, Makati City.

HOMECOMING. ST. Mary's Academy of Caloocan City (formerly Our Lady of Grace Academy) Batch '77 silver jubilarians will host the annual homecoming on Feb. 24. The whole-day alumni fair will feature a food and dry goods bazaar, medical mission, film showing, exhibits and cooking demo. Alumni association president Steffi Panganiban-Manhit calls on alumnae to join the committees and participate in event. Call Jean Mostrales, alumni coordinator, at 363-2524 or 363-3525.

PROMO. Sheaffer Ballpens has a tempting offer. A P500 single-receipt purchase of its products entitles one to a 20-percent discount on his next purchase of any of their products. The discount card may only be used once and is limited to one item. In case there are two or more items, the 20-percent discount will be applied to the highest value. The 20-percent discount will only be valid for cash purchases while credit card purchases will be entitled to a 10-percent discount. Discount cards must be surrendered to the Sheaffer merchandiser after use. Only those cards that bear an authorized signature will be valid for the promo. Avail of this promo at National Bookstore's branches at Glorietta, Greenbelt, Shangri-La, Megamall, Quezon Avenue, SM North Edsa, Robinsons Ermita and Alabang Town Center until Feb. 28.

GARDEN SHOW. "Paradise Garden in Ayala Alabang" is this year's theme for the 9th Annual Garden Show of the Ayala Alabang Village Garden Club, which runs until Feb. 20 at the Narra Park of the Ayala Alabang Village Garden Club. Over 50 concessionaires will display choice and rare plants for sale.



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Special mini Olympics held today

THE FRIENDSHIP Games, a mini special Olympics which is part of the nationwide annual observance of the Week for the Mentally Handicapped, will be held 12 nn-4 p.m. today at the Aguilar Sports Center, Doña Aguirre Avenue, Pilar Village, Las Piñas City.

Nine schools from Las Piñas, Parañaque, Makati and Muntinlupa are participating in the 3-year-old Games, spearheaded this year by Hope Development Center for Children. Special children will compete with each other in games divided into developmental (10-m and 25-m walk; 10-m run; tennis ball throw) and competitive (standing long jump; 25-m and 50-m run; 4 by 25 m relay; free throw).

Participating schools are: Elsie Gaches Village (headed by Angel Aguspina), Hope (headed by Nida Gusto), Las Piñas Montessori School (headed by Rowena Lorenzo), Mary Immaculate Parish Special School (headed by Bella Hernandez), Patubaes (headed by Micmic Quileste), Special Care Development Center (headed by Lolita Serraon), St. Coletta Special School (headed by Remy Mendez), Stepping Stone (headed by Marissa Labajo) and Teacher Mom (headed by Cristy Gacuma).

Special guests include Alex Babst of Special Olympics, and Florcelia E. Rosas, head social worker of Elsie Gaches Village.

This year, the country marks the Week for the Mentally Handicapped Feb. 11-17. The week is dedicated to persons who are mentally challenged like those with mental disabilities, Down's syndrome, autism and other neurological/mental/cognitive delays.

Call 801-7901 and 801-0794.

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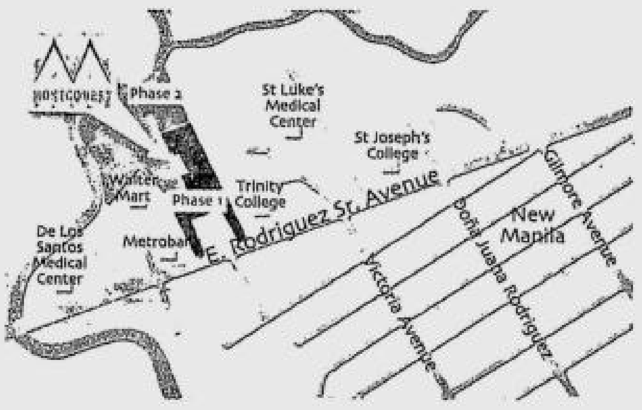

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- Robinsons Metro East Pasig
- Robinsons Place Novaliches
- Robinsons Place Iloilo
- Robinsons Place Cebu
- Ayala Center Cebu

PLANET SPORTS

The Athlete's Foot is located at:
- Alabang Town Center
- Festival Mall Alabang
- Ayala Center Makati
- Robinsons Galleria
- All Mall Araneta Center
- Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall
- Robinsons Place Ermita
- Robinsons Place Imus
- Pavilion Mall Binan
- Baguio Center Mall
- Ayala Center Cebu
- Robinsons Place Bacolod
- Gaisano Mall Davao
- Tutuban Mall
- NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan
- Marymart Iloilo

The Athlete's Foot

Nike Stadium is located at:
- Alabang Town Center
- Ayala Center Makati
- Power Plant Mall Rockwell Makati
- Shangri-la Plaza Ortigas
- SM Megamall
- SM City North Edsa
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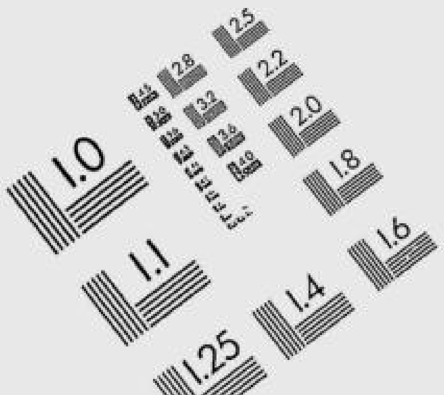
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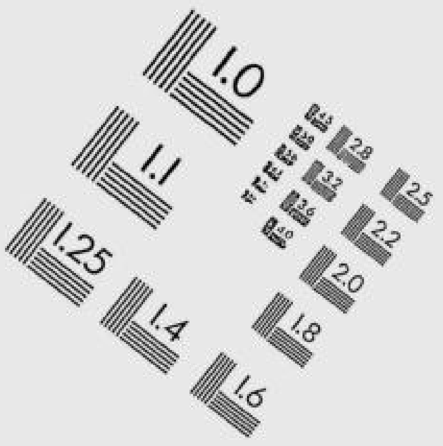
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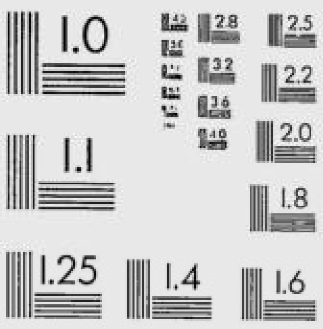
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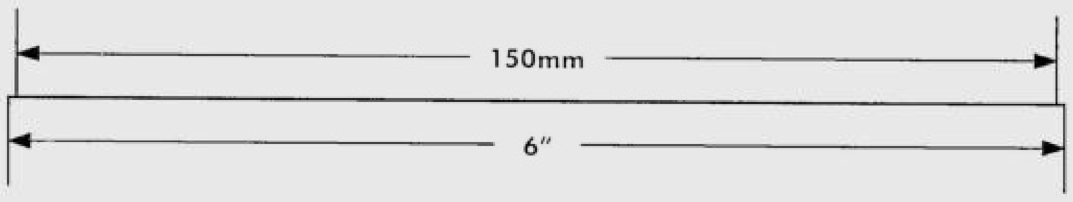

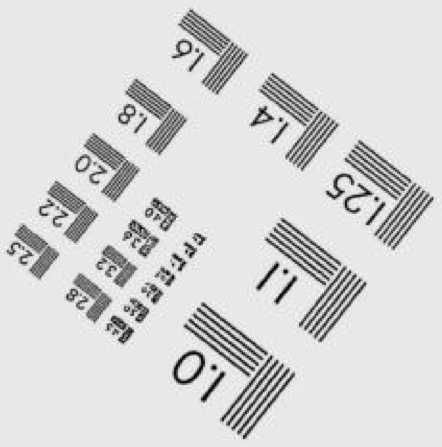
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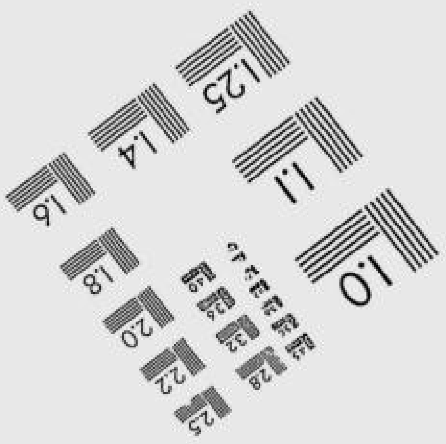
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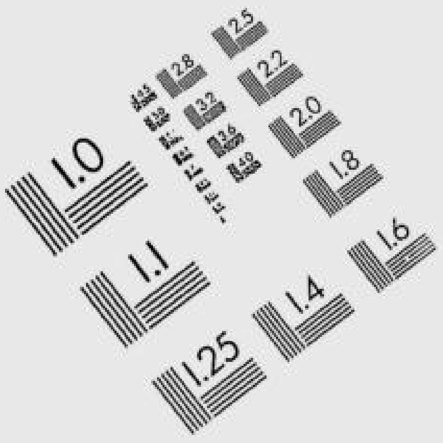
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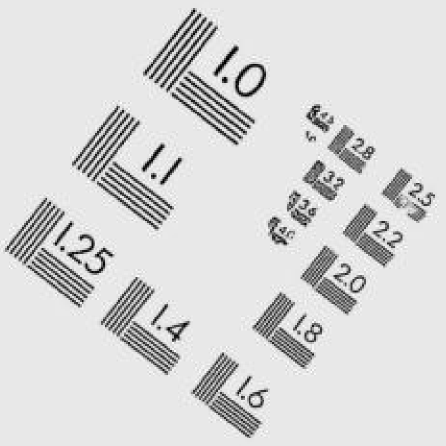
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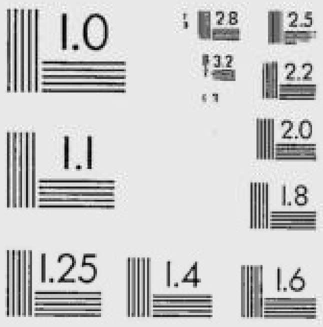
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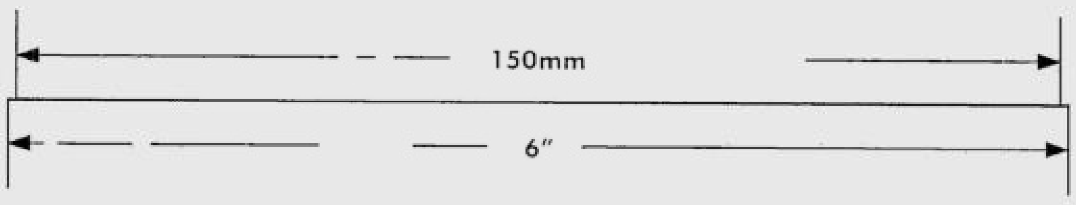

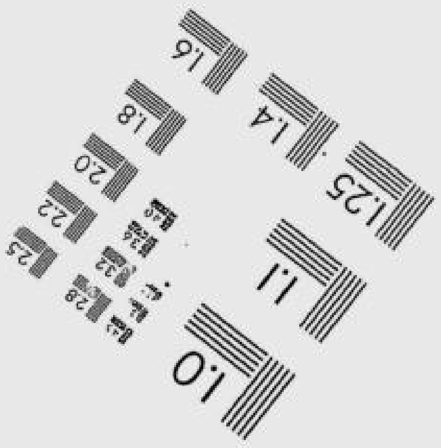
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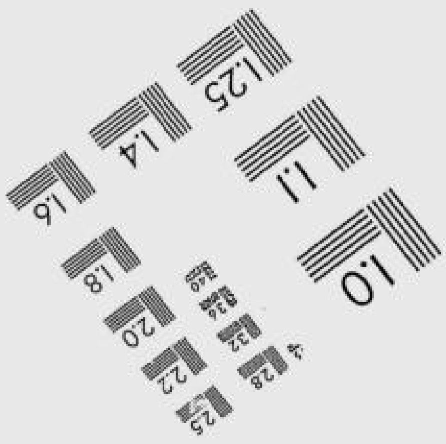
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